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COMMISSION ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

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GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR THE CONSERVATION AND UTILIZATION OF
PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

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GLOBAL SYSTEM FOR THE CONSERVATION AND UTILIZATION OF PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

In 1983 the member countries of FAO established a permanent intergovernmental forum on plant genetic resources: the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources, and a formal framework: the International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources. Since then the development of a Global System on Plant Genetic Resources for food and agriculture (see diagram attached) has been coordinated, overseen and monitored by the intergovernmental Commission. The objectives of this Global System are to ensure the safe conservation and promote the availability and sustainable utilization of plant genetic resources for present and future generations, by providing a flexible framework for sharing the benefits and burdens. The system covers the conservation (*ex situ* and *in situ*) and utilization of plant genetic resources - genes, genotypes and genepools - at molecular, population, species and ecosystem level. To date one hundred and forty countries are formally part of the System, of which 123 are members of the Commission and 110 have adhered to the International Undertaking (see list attached). UNCED's Agenda 21 has recommended the strengthening of the Global System and the further development of many of its components.

Basic Institutional Components

- *The Commission on Plant Genetic Resources* - established in 1983 - a unique intergovernmental global forum where countries which are donors or users of germplasm, funds and technology can discuss, on an equal footing, matters related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
- *The International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources* - a non-binding agreement to assure that plant genetic resources, especially species of present or future economic and social importance, are explored, collected, conserved, evaluated, utilized and made available for plant breeding and other scientific purposes. Complementary, negotiated agreements unanimously endorsed by all FAO member countries (FAO Conference Resolutions 4/89, 5/89 and 3/91) have been incorporated as annexes to the Undertaking. They recognize national sovereignty over PGR and Farmers' Rights as "*arising from the past and future contributions of farmers to conserving, improving and making available plant genetic resources*" and it is agreed that these Rights will be implemented through a sustainable and transparent international fund to finance a PGR Global Plan of Action.

Other components of the Global System (some under development)

Since its establishment the Commission has worked in the development of international agreements and arrangements to facilitate the conservation and use of plant genetic resources:

- *The International Code of Conduct for Plant Germplasm Collecting and Transfer*, an important tool in regulating the collection and transfer of plant genetic

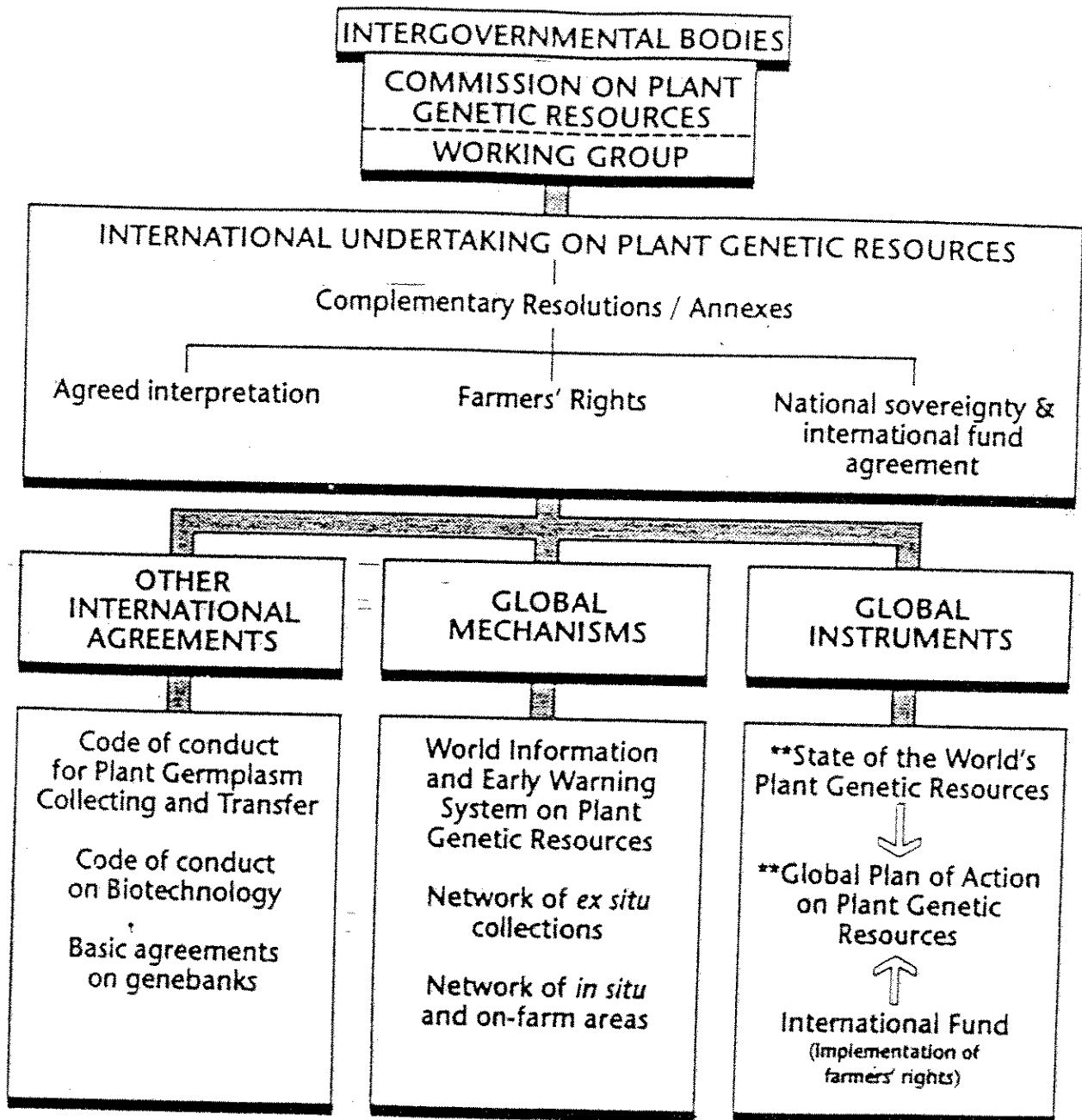
resources, with the aim of facilitating access to these resources, and promoting their equitable utilization and development. It was adopted through Conference Resolution 8/93.

- A *Code of Conduct for Biotechnology* as it affects the conservation and use of plant genetic resources.
- The *international network of ex situ base collections* under the auspices of FAO and with the technical assistance of IBPGR.
- The *network of in situ conservation areas* with special emphasis on wild relatives of cultivated plants, as well as on the promotion of "on-farm" conservation and utilization of land races.
- The *Global Information and Early Warning System* on Plant Genetic Resources for food and agriculture to collect and disseminate data and facilitate the exchange of information on plant genetic resources and related technologies and to draw rapid attention to hazards threatening the operation of genebanks and the loss of genetic diversity throughout the world.
- The *State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources* for food and agriculture, a report which will cover all aspects of the conservation and utilization of plant genetic resources, as well as activities and programmes being carried out by regional, international and non-governmental organizations, with the aim of identifying gaps, constraints and emergency situations.
- An *International Fund for Plant Genetic Resources* to provide a channel for countries, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, private industry and individuals to support conservation and promote the use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture on a sustainable basis, at world level. The International Fund which is envisaged in FAO Resolution 3/91 is expected to become a critical element in ensuring the equitability of the Global System and the implementation of Farmers' Rights.
- A rolling *Global Plan of Action* on Plant Genetic Resources for food and agriculture which is based on the State of the World's PGR and is aimed at rationalizing and coordinating efforts in this area. Major national and international agencies and institutions are expected to be involved in the implementation and financing of the plan and will also be involved in its preparation.

The Fourth *International Technical Conference on PGR* planned for 1996, will discuss the *first* State of the World on PGR and the *first* Global Plan of Action on PGR.

Illustrative Chart of the Global System

The Global System for the Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources *



For illustrative purposes only

*** The first State of the World and Global Plan of Action on Plant Genetic Resources will be produced during the preparatory process of the International Technical Conference.*

August 1994

MEMBERS OF FAO COMMISSION ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES
AND/OR COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE ADHERED TO THE
INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES

AFRICA	ASIA AND THE SOUTH WEST PACIFIC	EUROPE	LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
Algeria 1/2	Australia 1/2	Austria 1/2	Antigua & Barbuda 2/
Angola 1/2	Bangladesh 1/2	Belgium 1/2	Argentina 1/2
Benin 1/2	China, People's Republic of 1/	Bulgaria 1/2	Bahamas 1/2
Botswana 1/	Democrat. People's Rep. of Korea 1/2	Cyprus 1/2	Barbados 1/2
Burkina Faso 1/2	Fiji 2/	Czech Republic 2/	Belize 1/2
Cameroon 1/2	India 1/2	Denmark 1/2	Bolivia 1/2
Cape Verde 1/2	Indonesia 1/	Estonia 1/	Brazil 1/
Central African Rep. 1/2	Japan 1/	European Economic Community 1/	Chile 1/2
Chad 1/2	Korea, Rep. of 1/2	Finland 1/2	Colombia 1/2
Congo 1/2	Malaysia 1/	France 1/2	Costa Rica 1/2
Côte d'Ivoire 2/	Myanmar 1/	Germany 1/2	Cuba 1/2
Equatorial Guinea 1/2	Nepal 2/	Greece 1/2	Dominica 1/2
Ethiopia 1/2	New Zealand 1/2	Hungary 1/2	Dominican Rep. 1/2
Gabon 2/	Pakistan 1/	Iceland 1/2	Ecuador 1/2
Gambia 1/	Philippines 1/2	Ireland 1/2	El Salvador 1/2
Ghana 1/2	Samoa 1/2	Israel 1/2	Grenada 1/2
Guinea 1/2	Solomon Islands 2/	Italy 1/2	Guatemala 1/
Guinea-Bissau 1/	Sri Lanka 1/2	Liechtenstein 2/	Guyana 1/
Kenya 1/2	Thailand 1/	Lithuania 1/	Haiti 1/2
Liberia 1/2	Tonga 2/	Malta 1/	Honduras 1/2
Madagascar 1/2	Vanuatu 1/	Netherlands 1/2	Jamaica 2/
Malawi 2/		Norway 1/2	Mexico 1/2
Mali 1/2		Poland 1/2	Nicaragua 1/2
Mauritania 1/2		Portugal 1/2	Panama 1/2
Mauritius 1/2		Romania 1/2	Paraguay 2/
Morocco 1/2		Russia 2/	Peru 1/2
Mozambique 2/		Spain 1/2	Saint Christopher and Nevis 1/
Niger 1/2		Sweden 1/2	Saint Lucia 1/
Rwanda 1/2		Switzerland 1/2	Saint Vincent and The Grenadines 1/
Senegal 1/2		Turkey 1/2	Suriname 1/
Sierra Leone 1/2		United Kingdom 1/2	Trinidad & Tobago 1/2
South Africa 2/		Yugoslavia 1/2	Uruguay 1/
Sudan 1/2			Venezuela 1/
Tanzania 1/2			
Togo 1/2			
Uganda 1/			
Zaire 1/			
Zambia 1/2			
Zimbabwe 1/2			
	NEAR EAST		NORTH AMERICA
	Afghanistan 1/		Canada 1/
	Bahrain 2/	Kuwait 2/	United States of America 1/
	Egypt 1/2	Lebanon 1/2	
	Iran, Islamic Rep. of 1/2	Libya 1/2	
	Iraq 1/2	Oman 2/	
	Jordan 1/	Syria 1/2	
		Tunisia 1/2	
		Yemen 1/2	

1/ Members of the Commission.

2/ Countries which have adhered to the International Undertaking.

The above totals 140 countries and Regional Economic Integration Organizations which have become members of the Commission on Plant Genetic Resources (122) or which have adhered to the International Undertaking (110).