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13 March 2018

Invitation to the 9th Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on
Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

Rome, Italy, 25 - 27 July 2018

Reply requested by 11 April 2018

The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has the honour to announce that the 9th Session of the Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (Working Group) will be held at FAO headquarters in Rome from 25 to 27 July 2018. The opening will begin at 10.00 hours on Wednesday 25 July 2018.

The Session is being convened under the Regular Programme of the Organization. It will be conducted in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

The Session will be preceded by an informal dialogue on contributions of community seed banks to a global network on on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. Further information on the informal dialogue, which will be held on 24 July 2018 at FAO headquarters will be made available in due time on the website of the Working Group (see link below).

The Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture at its 7th Session in May 1997 established the Working Group. Its Members and their Alternates, as elected by the 16th Regular Session of the Commission in January 2017, are as follows:

Africa: Algeria, Angola, Central African Republic, Ghana, Uganda

First Alternate: Madagascar

Second Alternate: Niger

Asia: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Japan, Malaysia, Nepal

First Alternate: India

Second Alternate: Lao People's Democratic Republic

Europe: Czechia, Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway

First Alternate: Sweden

Second Alternate: France

Latin America and the Caribbean: Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Jamaica

First Alternate: Mexico

Second Alternate: Argentina

Near East: Egypt, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Lebanon, Saudi Arabia

First Alternate: Jordan

Second Alternate: Sudan

North America: Canada, United States of America

Southwest Pacific: Cook Islands, Samoa

First Alternate: Papua New Guinea

Second Alternate: Fiji

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This invitation is sent to addressees of invited FAO Members who are members of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture as prescribed in the official channels of communication of FAO, as follows:

For ACTION/INFORMATION, as appropriate:

- Main Addressees (Ministers for Foreign Affairs or Agriculture or other addressees selected by the Government);
- Permanent Representatives to FAO/Embassies.

This invitation is also being sent to heads of selected international organizations.

According to the Statutes of the Working Group, Alternates replace, in the order in which they appear on the above list, any Member who has resigned and informed the Secretariat accordingly. Members are requested to confirm to the Secretariat in writing their participation or non-participation in the Working Group meeting. If a Member of the Working Group is not able to attend the meeting and informs the Secretariat accordingly, one of the elected Alternates from the same region shall replace the Member in a timely manner. Where a Member of the Working Group does not attend the meeting without having informed the Secretariat prior to the meeting, the Working Group, in consultation with the region, may replace this Member, on an *ad hoc* basis, by a Member of the Commission from the same region that is present at the meeting.

Upon request to the Commission Secretariat, Members of the Commission that are not Members of the Working Group may participate in the Working Group in observer capacity. The Working Group, or the Bureau on its behalf, may invite experts and representatives of specialized international organizations to attend its meetings as observers.

The 16th Regular Session of the Commission decided that the Working Group should meet prior to the next Regular Session of the Commission (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-ms565e.pdf>). The Working Group will review: (i) progress in the implementation of the *Second Global Plan of Action for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture* (Second GPA - <http://www.fao.org/docrep/015/i2624e/i2624e00.htm>), including the final assessment of the implementation of the Second GPA for 2012-14; and (ii) the preparation of the *Third Report on the State of the World's Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*. The Working Group will also review the status and trends of seed policies, the revised draft Voluntary Guidelines on National Level Conservation and Use of Farmers' Varieties/Landraces and revised concept notes on global networking on (i) *in situ* conservation and (ii) on-farm management of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture. In response to the Commission's request, the Working Group will also address cross-sectoral issues, such as access and benefit-sharing, digital sequence information, the contribution of genetic resources to food security, climate change adaptation and nutrition. The Working Group shall also review a draft work plan for future work on sustainable use and conservation of microorganisms and invertebrate genetic resources, relevant to the plant genetic resource subsector, as well as the draft Revised Strategic Plan for the Commission (2018-2027).

In line with FAO's objective to minimize the environmental impact of the Organization's processes and to contribute to climate neutrality, the 9th Session of the Working Group will be a paper-smart meeting, i.e. the use of paper at all stages of the meeting will be greatly reduced. Participants are requested to bring their own documents to the meetings, as hard copies will not be available. The Provisional Agenda is enclosed. All meeting and background documents may be downloaded, as they become available, from the Working Group's dedicated website: <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/crops/thematic-sitemap/theme/seeds-pgr/itwg/9th/en/>.

The Director-General would appreciate receiving the names, official titles and addresses of the representatives designated to attend the Session by 11 April 2018. Online registration is available through the password-protected FAO Members Gateway at: <http://www.fao.org/members-gateway/en/>. Instructions for online registration can be downloaded from this site. Online registration requires the uploading of a recent passport-size digital photograph of each participant.

Participants from international organizations designated to attend the meeting as observers are requested to forward their names, official titles and addresses by email to ITWG-PGRFA@fao.org together with a recent passport-size digital photograph.

Before travelling, participants should check with the competent Italian Consulate if they need a visa to enter Italy. Kindly note that visas can be requested in the country of origin (country in which the participant holds citizenship) or in the country of residence (country in which the participant resides at the time of visa application). Those participants who do not have an Italian Consulate in their countries, may apply at the correspondent Italian Consulate in a neighbouring country, or at any other Consulate which belongs to a Schengen or European country. Visa applications should be submitted to the Italian Consulate one month before arrival in Italy. It is the responsibility of participants to request their visa applications personally, arrange for an appointment and present all the necessary documentation to the Italian Consulate. Participants who do not need an entry visa to enter Italy should ensure that their passports are valid for at least three months after the intended date of departure from the Schengen area. In these cases, upon entering Italy, border authorities may require the participants to show evidence for the reason and the duration of their stay in Italy. Participants with non-direct flights to Rome should check whether a transit visa is necessary to enter the transit area of international airports.