

**Intervention by Civil Society Organisations to the Plenary of the
7th GOVERNING BODY (GB7) of the International Seed Treaty (IT PGRFA)**

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**Intervention on Agenda 18: Dematerialisation of Genetic Sequences / Digital
Sequence Information**

Thank you, Mr. Chair

Civil Society views dematerialization, or sequence information, with profound concern, and strongly endorses the proposal of the G-77 to place this as an item on the Treaty's agenda, with a view to fully apply the Treaty's provisions to sequence information and to do so in harmony with other forums, particularly the CBD.

There is no point to continue efforts to enhance the Multilateral System if sequences are allowed to be privatized for the benefit of a few.

Not only does misuse of sequence information result in use of genetic resources without benefit sharing, dematerialization threatens to break the millennial relationship between seeds and farmers. Sequence information expresses traditional knowledge, and must be maintained under local administration and control.

Seed companies and institutions, including some CGIAR centers, are using dematerialization as an illegitimate means of control, including through patents on sequences and native traits, to extend an inequitable system. Also, the alarming ethical dimensions of what is unfolding cannot be ignored. All institutions that oversee ex-situ collections cannot ignore their obligations to extend their in-trust obligations into the information realm.

Chairperson, thousand of years of coevolution between local cultures and crops, which are expressed in the traditional knowledge and cultural and spiritual values encapsulated in seeds, must be protected. The meaningful participation of smallholder farmers and indigenous peoples in these discussions must be a key component of any agenda on this matter.