

HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH SESSION OF FAO COUNCIL

Rome, 20-25 November 2000

Report - Part III (as adopted)

NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE REVISION OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNDERTAKING ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES, IN HARMONY WITH THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY¹

1. The Chairman of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, presented his written report on the negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, and supplemented this by a verbal report on the Fourth Inter-sessional Meeting of the Chairman's Contact Group, held during the week before Council. He informed the Council that in the year 2000, three meetings of the Contact Group had taken place, with the result that some questions of substance were clarified and this made it possible for there to be a clean text for some crucial articles. He stressed, however, that important differences had become clear at the last meeting regarding the sharing of the monetary benefits arising from the commercial use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture in the Multilateral System. In order to progress in a balanced manner in this and other areas of the negotiating text, he felt that countries now needed to evaluate the situation politically and to show a coherent political will, so that decisions could be taken in the negotiations themselves, without the need to always refer back to capitals. He indicated that in order to conclude these negotiations rapidly, a fixed deadline needed to be established.
2. The Council recognized that the Undertaking, negotiated on the basis that it would take the form of a legally-binding instrument, closely linked to FAO and the Convention on Biological Diversity, would be crucial in ensuring food security and sustainable agriculture for present and future generations. It also recognized that solutions to the complex and specific technical and political issues in this area needed to be found, and that FAO should continue to give high priority to this task.
3. The Council underlined the importance of a Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-Sharing embodied in this International Undertaking.
4. It noted that the successful completion of the negotiations would also facilitate the full implementation of the *Global Plan of Action for the Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture*, and the effective management and use of the germplasm maintained in trust by the International Agricultural Research Centres.

¹ CL 119/7; CL 119/7-Sup. 1; CL 119/PV/2; CL 119/PV/9.

5. The Council therefore:

- Reaffirmed its commitment to the finalization of the revised International Undertaking within the auspices of FAO;
- Warmly thanked the Chairman of the Commission, Ambassador Gerbasi, for his untiring efforts, invited him to continue leading the negotiations to their conclusion and requested him to convene, in consultation with the Director-General and subject to the availability of funding, further sessions of the Contact Group as required, followed by a negotiating session of the Commission to finalize and agree upon the text of the International Undertaking for submission to the Thirty-first Session of the Conference in November 2001;
- Noted the suggestion that, in order to expedite the process, the composition of the delegations to the Contact Group should be such as would allow for the setting up, as appropriate, of a small regionally-balanced legal group to offer advice on the legal consistency of negotiated texts and of a technical group to address the definitions of terms;
- Recognized that the negotiations had reached a crucial stage and encouraged the negotiators to focus intensively and with requisite flexibility on the outstanding issues and to be in a position to take the relevant political decisions to conclude the revision of the Undertaking;
- Thanked the Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Switzerland for their generosity in hosting meetings of the Contact Group, and the Governments of Belgium, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland for their financial support; and
- Appealed to Members to provide further funds that would be necessary to maintain and increase the momentum, both for the preparation and holding of the necessary negotiating meetings, and for facilitating the participation of developing countries.