THE INTERNATIONAL TREATY ON PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES FOR FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Towards rational conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources

26 February 2018, Longyearbyen, Svalbard

Kent Nnadozie
Secretary

http://www.fao.org/plant-treaty
“In order to improve cultivated plants it is necessary to have the “building material” required, to have access to original species and varieties, and to utilize them...”

“..., it became evident to us that we would have to use a broad approach toward the systematic mobilization of plant resources for the purpose of regular utilization in order to improve existing crops and varieties”

Nikolai Ivanovich Vavilov.
What are the Treaty’s objectives?

• The *conservation* and *sustainable use* of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture
• The fair and equitable *sharing of benefits* derived from their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, for sustainable agriculture and food security
Vavilov’s Legacy

• The quotes from Dr Vavilov correlates to the 3 objectives of the International Treaty (conservation, use and benefit-sharing).

• Vavilov realized that all countries are interdependent when it comes to plant genetic resources.

• In order to have and access the genetic material, the international community needs to ensure that it is conserved for the present and future and that is easily accessible.
Article 5: Conservation, Exploration, Collection, Characterization, Evaluation and Documentation

Each Contracting party shall ... , in cooperation with other Contracting Parties ... promote an integrated approach to the exploration, conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture
Article 10: The Multilateral System of Access and Benefit-sharing

The Treaty establishes a multilateral system, both to facilitate access to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, and to share, in a fair and equitable way, the benefits arising from their use.
Vavilov’s Legacy

• Not all the countries have the capacity to have a large and broad *ex situ* collection, so we need international cooperation and a world’s network of genetic collections that come together through the Treaty’s Multilateral System for Access and Benefit-sharing.

• The Multilateral System is today the most systematic and largest global mechanism to ensure regular and facilitated access to PGRFA by breeders and researchers.
Multilateral System of ABS

• Over 2.3 million PGRFA accessions notified by Parties and IARCs and the CGIAR;
• Over 4.3 million accessions transferred
• Major crops: wheat, rice, barley, maize, chickpea and lentil (+ 1.2 mil PGRFA transferred)
• Training and capacity building has been provided directly and in partnerships
• Technical support and advice provided on ongoing basis
Article 17: Global Information System

Contracting Parties shall cooperate to develop and strengthen a global information system to facilitate the exchange of information, based on existing information systems, on scientific, technical and environmental matters related to plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.

[...]

[...]
Improving access to PGRFA through GLIS

- Information is vital to access and use PGRFA
- Information adds value to PGRFA
- The PoW on the Global information System was agreed in 2015
- In 2017 the GB has welcomed the quick progress made with:
  - The development of DOI descriptors as the PGRFA standards for GLIS
  - The setting up of the DOI registration module for PGRFA
  - The actual registration of more than half a million DOIS
- Working now to improve the Global Information System

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Now 144 Contracting Parties Including the EU
Partnerships & collaboration

• GB works through its bodies, Secretariat & partners;
• The Treaty provides for partnerships
• The GB advocates partnership and collaboration, realizing that it alone cannot do everything
• The bulk of responsibility lies with the CPs
• Need for coordination, not just to avoid duplication, but to optimize opportunities.
Seventh Session of the Governing Body in Kigali, Rwanda

30 October – 3 November 2017

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Enhancement of the Functioning of the Multilateral System

• Main political item in the GB-7 agenda, significant progress is needed to show commitment to Treaty implementation;
• Draft Revised SMTA: Proposal by the Working Group
  – Subscription System
  – Negotiating text with brackets
• Coverage and Expansion
  – Technical analysis and discussions on the scope of the expansion (all PGRFA/additional crops) and the legal form;
  – The Government of Switzerland made a proposal for amendment;
• Genetic information associated with material accessed from the Multilateral System;
  – Important emerging issue for PGRFA that merits thorough analysis.

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Select GB-7 Outcomes

- **Urges** Contracting Parties that have not yet done so to identify at accession level the material that forms part of the Multilateral System and include the respective passport data into the Global Information System;

- **Emphasizes** the importance of collections that are fully characterized and evaluated, and **appeals** to both Contracting Parties and natural and legal persons to make them available in the Multilateral System together with the relevant non-confidential characterization and evaluation data;

- **Requests** the Secretary to continue in his efforts to secure agreements with other relevant international institutions that meet the requirements of Article 15 of the International Treaty.
Res. 12/2017: Management Svalbard Global Seed of the Vault

- **Recalling** that the adoption of the International Treaty gave the impetus to the Norwegian government to proceed with the establishment of the Seed Vault;
- **Reaffirms** the strong linkages between the Seed Vault and the International Treaty;
- **Renews** its commitment and support to the Seed Vault following its first ten years of operation;
- **Acknowledges** that the Seed Vault is an important element of the Global System for ex situ conservation and use of PGRFA;
Res. 12/2017: Management Svalbard Global Seed of the Vault

• **Requests** the Secretary to further explore with the Government of Norway other practical means to further enhance the linkages between the International Treaty and the Seed Vault, and report to the Governing Body;

• **Invites** Contracting Parties, international institutions and other relevant bodies to consider making use of the Seed Vault in their strategy for securing their important seed collections and for the purpose of long-term storage of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture.
The Habsburg Emperor Rudolf II as Vertumnus, by Giuseppe Arcimboldo, 1591. Skokloster Castle, Sweden.