

Report of the Steering Committee

Fourteenth Meeting

31 May - 2 June 2016, Višegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina





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Bioversity International is a global research-for-development organization. We have a vision – that agricultural biodiversity nourishes people and sustains the planet.

We deliver scientific evidence, management practices and policy options to use and safeguard agricultural biodiversity to attain sustainable global food and nutrition security. We work with partners in low-income countries in different regions where agricultural biodiversity can contribute to improved nutrition, resilience, productivity and climate change adaptation.

Bioversity International is a member of the CGIAR Consortium – a global research partnership for a food secure future.

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The European Cooperative Programme for Plant Genetic Resources (ECPGR) is a collaborative programme among most European countries aimed at contributing to national, sub-regional and regional programmes in Europe to rationally and effectively conserve *ex situ* and *in situ* Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and increase their utilization (<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/homepage.html>). The Programme, which is entirely financed by the member countries, is overseen by a Steering Committee composed of National Coordinators nominated by the participating countries and a number of relevant international bodies. The Coordinating Secretariat is hosted by Bioversity International. The Programme operates through Working Groups composed of pools of experts nominated by the National Coordinators. The ECPGR Working Groups deal with either crops or general themes related to plant genetic resources (documentation and information and *in situ* and on-farm conservation). Members of the Working Groups carry out activities based on specific ECPGR objectives, using ECPGR funds and/or their own resources.

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The bridge over the Drina at Višegrad © Lorenzo Maggioni, ECPGR.

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CONTENTS

PART I. SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES DISCUSSED AND OF CLARIFICATIONS GIVEN	1
Opening session	1
Report on Phase IX	1
Technical and financial report of Phase IX	1
Report from the ExCo on progress made during Phase IX, including evaluation of Working Group Chairs	2
Results of the evaluation of the proposals submitted under the Third Call.....	2
Planning for Phase X	2
Recommendations from the ExCo on Phase X	2
Procedure to define future ECPGR hosting arrangements	3
Round-the-table perspective on hosting arrangements and participation of countries in Phase X.....	3
ECPGR Strategy for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA).....	4
ECPGR Strategy for PGRFA in Europe.....	4
The Svalbard Seed Vault and collaboration with ECPGR.....	5
ECPGR and the Nagoya Protocol	6
The Nagoya Protocol and the Multilateral System in Europe.....	6
Implementing the Nagoya Protocol in Europe	7
How can ECPGR navigate in the Nagoya/MLS landscape?	7
Group discussions	8
Collaborations	9
Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	9
European Seed Association (ESA).....	9
European Association for Research on Plant Breeding (EUCARPIA).....	10
Conclusion.....	10
Discussion and approval of the report	10
Concluding remarks of the meeting.....	10
PART II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS	11
Recommendations for the remainder of Phase IX.....	11
Outcome 1 – AEGIS.....	11
Outcome 2 – EURISCO	11
Outcome 3 – <i>In situ</i> / On-farm	11
Outcome 4 – Resources.....	11
Outcome 5 – Users	12
Evaluation of WG Chairs.....	12
Objectives of ECPGR	12
Recommendations for Phase X.....	12
Objectives of ECPGR.....	12
Mode of operation of Phase X.....	12
WG activities	13
EURISCO training.....	13

Documentation of <i>in situ</i> conservation.....	13
Collaboration on PGR policy issues	13
Fundraising	13
Procedure to define future ECPGR hosting arrangements	14
ECPGR Strategy for PGRFA in Europe.....	14
ECPGR and the Treaty/Nagoya Protocol	14
ANNEX I. HELPER SHEET.....	15
ANNEX II. AGENDA	16
ANNEX III. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.....	18

Related background documents and presentations can be downloaded from:
<http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/about-ecpgr/steering-committee/14th-sc-meeting/>

PART I. SUMMARY OF THE ISSUES DISCUSSED AND OF CLARIFICATIONS GIVEN

Part I of this report includes short summaries of the presentations (all available on the ECPGR website) and/or refers to existing online background documents. Main clarification points and discussed items are also summarized. All the recommendations and decisions agreed by the Steering Committee (SC) during the discussions are listed in Part II.

Opening session

(Chair: E. Thörn)

E. Thörn, Chair of the ECPGR Executive Committee (ExCo) welcomed the participants to Bosnia and Herzegovina. Welcoming addresses were offered by Siniša Marčić, Assistant Minister for Science and Technology in the Government of the Republic of Srpska, Dusan Nešković, Assistant Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Gordana Đurić, National Coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina (see opening statement online).

The Agenda was adopted without amendments.

Report on Phase IX

(Chair: G. Đurić)

Technical and financial report of Phase IX

(L. Maggioni)

See online background documents “Mid-term report on ECPGR Phase IX”, “2015 Financial Report” and PPT presentation.

Discussion

F. Begemann suggested that a detailed discussion was needed on the AEGIS role (whether it is having an impact). As 20% of Working Group (WG) respondents to the questionnaire are not satisfied about the new ECPGR mode of operation, we need to look into details to try some improvements or simplifications.

C. Allender encouraged considering how to improve in the future the relationship between genebanks and users.

S. Kell raised the question about the need for a regional policy for a crop wild relative (CWR) strategy implementation.

J. Weibull mentioned the ongoing Public Private Partnership initiative in the Nordic Region as a successful initiative funded by the five Nordic countries and involving practically all Nordic breeding firms.

V. Holubec stressed the importance that large collections be fully represented in AEGIS. He also suggested reconsidering the 75:25 ratio of funds dedicated to meetings vs. other actions.

D. Rungis asked for a clarification about the need for National Inventory Focal Points' approval of the upload of C&E data. This step is required by the legal agreement between Bioversity and National Focal Points about data publishing responsibility.

The Mid-term progress report was approved by the Steering Committee.

Report from the ExCo on progress made during Phase IX, including evaluation of Working Group Chairs

(Chair: E. Thörn)

See online background document "Report from the ExCo on progress made during Phase IX, including evaluation of Working Group Chairs – Highlights and recommendations for the remaining part of the Phase".

Results of the evaluation of the proposals submitted under the Third Call

(R. De Salvador and L. Maggioni)

During its meeting on 30 May, the ExCo discussed the eight eligible proposals received under the Third Call. Seven proposals were accepted for funding, either without amendments (submitted by the Documentation and Information and Wheat WGs), or with the need for minor amendments (submitted by the Grain Legumes, Leafy Vegetables, MAP, *Vitis* and On-farm Conservation and Management WGs). The proposal from the *Beta* WG was not accepted, due to lack of clarity on some relevant aspects. Activity Coordinators will be informed about conditions for acceptance or reasons for rejection. A total budget of € 100 600 was awarded under the Third Call. Two proposals from the Second Call had been resubmitted by the Barley and Forages WGs and these were also granted for a total budget of € 30 000.

After three calls for proposals, a total budget of € 306 800 has been awarded to fund 21 proposals. According to the budget established at the beginning of Phase IX, remaining funds for other calls amount to € 147 370. The ratio of funds allocated to meetings vs. other actions corresponds so far to 63:37, not too distant from the target of 75:25.

Discussion

A clarification was requested on the reasons for not making any changes in this Phase. ExCo replied that it is considered too early to judge whether the new mode of operation is effective and that minor adjustments to the Grant Scheme procedure were made and that the quality of the applications has been improving.

Support for regularly sustaining Doc&Info training was expressed by the Netherlands, as well as for the possibility that the SC commissions other types of capacity building.

It was clarified that WGs that have not received funds so far would not be necessarily given priority for funding in the next Calls, as the quality of the proposals should remain the decisive factor.

Towards the end of the Phase, an increased budget may be dedicated to fund Activity proposals, depending on receipt of outstanding contributions. In such a case, it was thought that the level of funding per project could be increased at the discretion of the ExCo.

Planning for Phase X

(Chair: J. Weibull)

Recommendations from the ExCo on Phase X

(E. Thörn)

The fulfilment of the objectives of ECPGR is a long-term undertaking.

The size of WGs might prevent effective communication and collaboration and the Chair has a very heavy task.

In order to achieve the objectives of ECPGR in an efficient way, the WGs need to focus on most appropriate activities and use of available expertise among its members. WGs could develop European crop conservation and use strategies in order to link the many dispersed responsibilities and activities (especially after the agreement on the Concepts “for *in situ* conservation of crop wild relatives in Europe” and “for on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA”) in a coherent manner.

Training will be needed in order to fulfil a number of the ECPGR objectives.

Support for the implementation of the *in situ*/on farm concepts will be needed.

The policy area is possibly one of the most important ones for individual governments. At present there are no mechanisms within ECPGR to allow coordination on policy issues, to plan strategic actions, etc. Thus, it seems important to create such a mechanism, i.e. a new WG (possibly combined with a new objective for Phase X) on policy.

It is expected that such a development would allow ECPGR to gain more visibility, to show more impact and to prove its relevance to organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the European Commission (EC).

In order to fulfil the ECPGR objectives within a reasonable time, it will be necessary to increase the budget for Phase X.

Discussion

Rather than developing European crop conservation strategies, it was suggested that ECPGR could have a dialogue with the Crop Trust and offer to participate in the revision of Global Crop Conservation Strategies whenever it is appropriate. The development of global strategies by ECPGR experts for crops of specific European interest could also be promoted within Working Groups.

Procedure to define future ECPGR hosting arrangements

(F. Begemann)

The ECPGR Secretariat has historically always been hosted by IPBGR/IPGRI/Bioversity International. In July 2010 the ECPGR external review recommended to evaluate hosting conditions on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis. A tender offering the options to bid for the hosting of the Secretariat and/or for EURISCO was launched in October 2012 under the supervision of the Executive Committee. The tender to host EURISCO was won by the Leibniz Institute of Plant Genetics and Crop Plant Research (IPK), Gatersleben, while the Global Crop Diversity Trust (GCDDT) in Bonn, Germany, was preferred as the host for the Secretariat. However, during negotiation for the implementation of this latter decision, the Trust withdrew its offer. An agreement with Bioversity International was then concluded for a continued hosting arrangement in Maccaresse, Italy at the same conditions as in Phase VIII, with increased overhead from 13% to 18.15% and a convenient discount on the cost of “Facilities and Services”. Two options were proposed for Phase X, either to launch a new tender in 2017 for the Secretariat (and EURISCO) or to give the mandate to the ExCo to negotiate with Bioversity and IPK for continued hosting arrangements during Phase X and present a proposed procedure with related costs to the Steering Committee for consideration and possible adoption.

Round-the-table perspective on hosting arrangements and participation of countries in Phase X

Hosting arrangements

J. Engels, representing Bioversity International, communicated that Bioversity was interested to continue the hosting of the ECPGR Secretariat during Phase X, under the same conditions

as for Phase IX (i.e. 18.15% overheads; continue providing a legal framework for the operation of EURISCO – through a sub-contract with IPK; and contribution to the cost for facilities and services of Euro 81K for the entire phase). Bioversity is also keen to generate synergies with ECPGR through the hosting of its Secretariat.

F. Begemann specified that also IPK would be very open to continue hosting EURISCO, which is seen as a long-term task, under the same terms, except for some reconsideration of the salary scale.

L. Maggioni confirmed the Secretary support for a stable option that would not involve a new tender procedure. He also expressed satisfaction for the current hosting arrangements of the Secretariat and of EURISCO.

Th. van Hintum, in his position as Chair of the Documentation and Information WG, also encouraged the continuation of EURISCO at IPK during the next Phase, upon consideration of the excellent support offered by IPK staff and especially the EURISCO Coordinator.

F. Begemann thought that the SC should consider the various options, including different options for the hosting arrangements during the next Phase, in preparation for Phase XI.

National Coordinators from Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Italy expressed agreement on maintaining stability and not opening a tender for the next Phase.

Participation of countries in Phase X

National Coordinators from the following countries expressed strong interest for the continuation into Phase X and a good or reasonable likelihood that their country will continue to contribute regularly:

Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia (FYR), Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom.

Poland, Romania and Turkey were positive towards Phase X, but unable to guarantee continuing Ministerial support at the present stage.

The National Coordinator from Israel expressed a low interest from her country in the current setup of ECPGR, considering that regular networking activity is no longer guaranteed for all the Working Groups.

ECPGR Strategy for plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA)

(Chair: M. Lateur)

ECPGR Strategy for PGRFA in Europe

(F. Begemann)

The ECPGR objectives are geared towards conservation, use and documentation of plant genetic resources. Various arguments indicate the benefits of a transnational approach for these objectives. Opportunities to interact with the European Union/European Commission (EU/COM) in this regard have been limited. The “EU Preparatory Action” which was just completed has developed a number of recommendations, including “securing long-term funding by developing an EU agrobiodiversity strategy and planning for activities during

EU budget negotiations". Should this recommendation be taken up, ECPGR could help in developing the EU Agrobiodiversity Strategy (on the conservation of genetic resources for food, agriculture and forestry), as well as an EU Programme for conservation and use of PGRFA. ECPGR could also offer its technical expertise for advice and for the implementation of the EU Programme. It is proposed that the ExCo and Secretariat within the coming months send a letter to the EU/COM with proposals, recommendations and offers for collaboration in the development of an EU Agrobiodiversity Strategy and an EU Programme for conservation and use of PGRFA.

Discussion

The following clarifications were given:

- Arguments for the need of transnational approaches should be collected for all the aspects of PGRFA (*ex situ*, documentation, and landraces' conservation). The arguments for CWRs are already elaborated in the ECPGR *Concept for in situ conservation of crop wild relatives in Europe*.
- EU structures such as the topic centres under the European Environment Agency are not suitable for genetic resources' activities, since they are dedicated to research. ECPGR needs to find an anchor institution and would require a dialogue with the EC.
- The continuation of a Programme such as GENRES 870/2004 was not seen to be the best solution for the future. It would be better to build a coherent approach, with a strategy and a programme where gaps and redundancies can be identified and different solutions implemented.
- Whenever approaching the EU, it should be recognized that the ECPGR membership includes EU and non-EU countries.

S. Csörgő offered the help of the European Seed Association (ESA) for lobbying activity, including at the European Parliament (EP) level. The offer was warmly appreciated by the SC, with an intention to follow up with it.

The Svalbard Seed Vault and collaboration with ECPGR

(Å. Asdal)

The Svalbard Global Seed Vault (SGSV) was opened in February 2008. Its objective is that all unique genebank seed accessions conserved in national, regional and international genebanks are safety-duplicated in the SGSV. Therefore, all genebanks are invited to deposit safety-duplicate seeds at SGSV. Svalbard is ideally suited for conservation in a remote, stable and cold area and the Norwegian government, the owner of the Vault, is committed to take care of the seeds on behalf of everyone. Therefore, SGSV can offer safe storage of genebank duplicates and also collaborate with National Programmes to create public awareness. It should be noted that seed transfer does not involve any transfer of legal ownership. Safety duplicates can only be returned to the depositing genebank and the deposit is consistent with relevant international law (Convention on Biological Diversity [CBD], International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture [ITPGRFA]). Viability monitoring and regeneration of original accessions remains the responsibility of the depositor. Although the Vault is perceived as an insurance mechanism, in the hope that it would never be used, actually a first request for withdrawal of seeds came from ICARDA in September 2015. It is also one of the AEGIS principles that "Associate Members ensure as soon as possible safety duplication of their European Accessions in agreed conditions, under black-box arrangements as appropriate, at another Associate Member genebank, possibly in a different country, and/or at the Svalbard Global Seed Vault". Therefore, it is proposed that ECPGR could stress the need for safety duplication of seeds and facilitate contact between

ECPGR member states and their genebank collections. So far 19 European institutes deposited seeds in the Seed Vault. National Coordinators could act as mediators between SGSV/ECPGR and genebanks in Europe.

Discussion

It was clarified that the Seed Vault is overseen by an International Advisory Council, whose members are representatives of international and national genebanks, the Crop Trust, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the FAO Treaty, the Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and other experts on their personal capacity. This Council maintains a global approach, therefore it may not be an appropriate body for ECPGR to be represented in it. It was also pointed out that the Vault could accept material that has not been already duplicated elsewhere (primary duplicate), but only as justified exceptions. Indeed, according to the AEGIS Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), European genebanks are given the option to use the Seed Vault as primary safety duplication site.

Å. Asdal explained that ICARDA requested its material back from the Vault (rather than from its primary duplication sites) as it would be much easier to receive it quickly from one single place without complicated formalities.

ECPGR and the Nagoya Protocol

(Chair: R. De Salvador)

The Nagoya Protocol and the Multilateral System in Europe

(S. Bhatti, International Treaty)

The International Treaty for PGRFA (ITPGRFA), in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, established a system (Multilateral System - MLS) that guarantees facilitated access to PGRFA. Agrobiodiversity must be made accessible to every farmer, breeder and scientist to enhance our options to ensure food security. The MLS enables access through a standard agreement called SMTA (Standard Material Transfer Agreement). Already 3.2 million accessions were transferred globally in this way, through 47 000 SMTAs. A process to improve the MLS is under way to increase user-based payments and contributions to the Benefit-sharing Fund and to enhance the functioning of the Multilateral System by additional measures. A Global Information System (GLIS) will create the global entry point to information and knowledge for strengthening the capacity for PGRFA conservation, management and utilization. The ITPGRFA constitutes a specialized international access and benefit-sharing instrument within the meaning of Article 4(4) of the Nagoya Protocol and therefore MLS material is excluded by the Nagoya Protocol coverage. The Nagoya Protocol and the International Treaty established a Memorandum of Understanding to collaborate for harmonious and mutually supportive implementation.

In conclusion, it is important to facilitate access to and exchange of PGRFA for agrobiodiversity and food security, and there is the need for creating legal space for the implementation of the Treaty and its Multilateral System, especially in the broader context of access and benefit sharing (ABS) legislation. Clear administrative rules for users that consider the special characteristics of PGRFA and their uses also need to be established.

Discussion

The following clarifications were given:

- Non-Annex I material transferred with SMTA would be exchanged under the same conditions as are applicable to the MLS. This corresponds to a distinction that is made

between “inclusion into the MLS” and “coverage of the MLS”. The interpretation is that it is exchanged under the same conditions.

- Recently several new countries have ratified the Treaty (Argentina, Chile and others) and also the USA is considering joining. This makes the MLS more universal and increases overall use. There is a strong trend to ratify, especially countries that ratified the Nagoya Protocol that have more reasons to also ratify the Treaty, which allows Protocol compliance.
- Notifications of material included in the MLS have to be made at accession level. During the first years of operations, a letter was used to notify inclusion of additional material in the MLS, including non-Annex I crops. Now, an online “inclusion facility” has been developed in connection with the Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) to make that information searchable through the Global Information System.
- Annex I material in the public domain and under the management and control of member countries is by default included in the MLS, even though the formal notification to the Treaty has not taken place.
- Reporting of SMTAs issued for non-Annex I material are collected by FAO, which will act in principle as a Third Party Beneficiary also in this case, unless Parties use an SMTA with a footnote specifically excluding the Third Party Beneficiary provision, as is the case for AEGIS. It might be better to reconsider such a footnote in order to remain compliant with the Nagoya Protocol.
- ECPGR can support its members to comply with their obligations of making the material available in the MLS, by facilitating registration of material through the adoption of DOIs in the Global Information System, in collaboration with the Treaty Secretariat.
- European countries that are not yet members of the Treaty were invited to ratify it.

Implementing the Nagoya Protocol in Europe

(A. Kozłowska, Directorate-General for Environment, European Commission)

The three pillars of the Nagoya Protocol are Access, Benefit-sharing and Compliance. The EU Regulation 511/2014 just focuses on Compliance. Access rules have been established in the EU by Spain and Croatia and at draft stage also in France. However, in these cases PGRFA are not included. Geographic, temporal and material scopes of the Regulation were clarified. The users’ obligations consist in exercising due diligence regarding legality of access (and sharing of benefits) and transferring the same obligations to subsequent users. The EU Regulation provides tools facilitating compliance (register of collections and recognition of best practices). It also introduces check-points ensuring the implementation of the Regulation. These consist of the need for the user to submit due diligence declarations at the stage of research funding and of final development of a product.

Users acquiring PGRFA covered by an SMTA (ITPGRFA) are also considered to have fully exercised all aspects of due diligence. Complementary measures to the EU Regulations are a “Consultation Forum” on ABS Regulation and “Guidance documents” on the scope of the EU Regulation, anticipated to be adopted soon, and on utilization for different sectors and actors at the beginning of the value chain.

How can ECPGR navigate in the Nagoya/MLS landscape?

(Th.J.L. van Hintum)

The Nagoya/MLS landscape requires orientation for its navigation. ECPGR could have an impact on the landscape if it could play a role in policy decision-making. This would require the establishment of a WG or a Task Force (TF) on policy issues. In particular, ECPGR could

coordinate/support the implementation of PGR legal measures, as well as play a role in supporting ABS negotiations (collecting missions). The current landscape also has an impact on ECPGR. It could for example influence the terms of access to genetic resources. The use of SMTA in AEGIS allows compliance with EU regulation. AEGIS quality system could also be influenced whenever it would be beneficial to include the AEGIS collections in the EU register of collections. EURISCO may also provide information on which accessions are part of the EU register. Terms of access to *in situ* and on-farm material require clarification.

Discussion

F. Begemann explained that provisions and guidelines are available in Germany for distribution of wild *Vitis* from *in situ* sources via SMTAs. Moreover, agricultural genebanks are only accepting material with an SMTA and there are no internal recommendations to become EU registered collections, as the due diligence compliance of the Nagoya Protocol is satisfied by the use of the SMTA. Moreover, becoming a registered collection might attract an excessive number of requests for material, beyond the current capacity for distribution.

M. Rasmussen pointed out that NordGen also distributes PGRFA material for different purposes than those covered by the SMTA. Therefore, using the SMTA would not be sufficient to comply with the EU ABS regulation in these cases. For this specific issue it would be necessary to find a solution by developing a “best practice”, to be proposed for acceptance by the EC. A supporting role by the Secretariat to develop joint guidelines could be desirable, such as preparing a practical guide to help NCs for the practical implementation of the MLS and the use of the SMTA, taking into account different situations and practical examples.

S. Csörgő suggested that ECPGR could formulate its position regarding the ongoing discussion on the revision of the SMTA. However, F. Begemann pointed out that the European region already has experts for the sub-groups which are dealing with the SMTA revision. The formulation of a position by ECPGR would require a lot of investment and therefore the relevance of this additional effort would not add much value to the discussion, unless ECPGR has very specific and clear points to put forward.

R. De Salvador reminded the NCs of the importance of establishing a linkage at national level between environmental and agricultural ministries in relevant policy discussions.

Group discussions

(Chairs: ExCo members)

Four groups were formed to discuss actions to be proposed for the remaining of Phase IX and for Phase X, based on the annexed “helper sheet” (Issues for Group discussion, 1 June 2016). The resulting recommendations and decisions are included in Part II.

Collaborations

(Chair: E. Thörn)

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

(A. Bourqui)

A. Bourqui attended the meeting on behalf of Béla Bartha, representative in the SC, working for an NGO network for on-farm conservation and management activities. The NGOs are active in direct use of PGR, marketing activities of small seed companies and seed exchange activities in different seed savers networks. They also coordinate and establish community seed banks all over Europe, improve and develop varieties by collaborative breeding activities, involving farmers and other stakeholders and are active in issues such as seed legislation, patent Act and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). At the moment there is no common position of European NGOs on the Nagoya Protocol. Most of them also do not integrate their collections into the MLS, since they believe that the system is not working properly and maintain a critical position on the insufficient contribution of the seed industry to the benefit-sharing. A national coordination platform for on-farm/*in situ* conservation activities is missing in many countries. At the European level it would be desirable to form a platform, including stakeholders with a broader picture of sustainable use of PGR. National and European long-term strategies for on-farm conservation activities require a long-term focus that is currently missing.

The Swiss Commission for the cultivated plants (CPC-SKEK), based in Bern, Switzerland, puts together a network of member NGOs. It is a lobbying organization offering information, organizing congresses, participating in platforms and taking positions.

European Seed Association (ESA)

(Szonja Csörgő)

ESA is the single voice of the European seed industry whose main objective is to represent its interest with relevant decision-makers, in particular European institutions. Action is undertaken through involvement in a number of organizations and direct engagement in a number of fora under the EC and EP. Regular collaboration also goes on with other players related to agriculture and biotechnology, as well as NGOs, Brussels-based press and the wider public. ESA has 38 national seed associations (Association members), 40 direct company members (individual members) and 29 members in seed-related business (Associate Members). All activities (information, representation and lobbying) are related to seed issues (seed marketing, including genetically modified (GM) and organic seed; intellectual property rights (IPR); biodiversity; access to genetic resources; research; plant/seed health; seed treatment; environment; land use and food production).

Lobbying is carried out at several levels, national and EU level through contacts, documentation and organizing specific events and inviting people for field visits.

The structure of ESA includes seven crop sections and two horizontal committees and many WGs. The Secretariat has eight members. ESA members offer in-kind support with sustainable use and active conservation of PGR, involvement in public-private partnerships (PPPs), work with and support national genebanks in a number of countries (regeneration, evaluation) and offer technology support. ESA is also involved in research and innovation, looking for opportunities for project proposals. ESA can benefit from ECPGR for access to the genebank community/network, bringing breeders needs to the attention of collections, benefiting from the tools developed by ECPGR and assisting in making them more effective and identifying common interests. ESA can offer to ECPGR more active involvement, a

direct channel to raise awareness towards and interact with users of PGR, experience in outreach, collaboration in projects and joint efforts in lobbying.

On a case-by-case basis it is possible to invite observers such as the ECPGR Secretariat or ExCo in the ESA Working Group meetings and congresses, such as the next one in October 2016 in Rome.

European Association for Research on Plant Breeding (EUCARPIA)

(S. Kell)

S. Kell became Chair of the EUCARPIA Genetic Resources Section in 2014. EUCARPIA aims to promote scientific and technical cooperation in the field of plant breeding in order to foster its further development. It includes 11 sections and organizes regular section meetings and a general congress every four years. The Genetic Resources Section currently includes approximately 680 members from 61 countries worldwide. The Genetic Resources section board comprises 10 members and will organize its next meeting 9-11 May 2017 in Montpellier, France. There is an overlap of membership between the EUCARPIA Sections and ECPGR Working Groups, with common interests for collaborative projects and joint meetings. The Section and ECPGR link via individual members. Potential for collaboration includes user needs surveys, feedback on ECPGR policy and technical documents, formal backing for ECPGR recommendations to the EC and EP regarding an EU PGRFA strategy, a possible ECPGR side event at the Montpellier conference and/or holding the conference in association with ECPGR. S. Kell noted that she had approached the EUCARPIA Secretariat to upload the ECPGR logo on the EUCARPIA website.

NGOs, ESA, EUCARPIA and ECPGR share similar objectives and opportunities to strengthen their links and possibly the development of structural collaborations should be explored, such as regular participation in the respective meetings and exchange of information.

Conclusion

(Chair: E. Thörn)

Discussion and approval of the report

The report was approved by the Steering Committee after discussion and a few revisions.

Concluding remarks of the meeting

E. Thörn was pleased that the SC took important decisions and recommendations for the remainder of the current Phase and also started to plan for the next Phase. She was confident that the SC would be well prepared for the next Phase at the time of its next meeting, which is tentatively planned for May 2018.

Sincere thanks were given to the Secretariat, including the EURISCO Coordinator, the ExCo members and all the participants. Warm thanks were given to Gordana Đurić and all her team for the preparation and management of the meeting in Višegrad. The ExCo Chair was finally gratefully thanked by the SC for her successful management of the meeting.

PART II. RECOMMENDATIONS AND DECISIONS

Recommendations for the remainder of Phase IX

Outcome 1 – AEGIS

1. Member countries which have not yet completed Associate Member Agreements with their national genebanks and/or other institutions managing germplasm that is or will be included in the European Collection on behalf of the National PGR Programme are encouraged to do so.
2. National Coordinators (NCs) should take stronger and more persistent action to promote the identification of AEGIS candidate accessions in their respective countries.
3. NCs and Working Group (WG) Chairs should focus on the guidelines for identifying and flagging accessions in order to streamline the procedures between countries.
4. Associate Members (AMs) should be directly addressed by NCs with a questionnaire regarding the implementation status of the AEGIS principles.
5. NCs are encouraged to urge their respective AMs to finalize their genebank manuals.
6. Currently there seems to be no source of funding for quality upgrading and prospects of receiving project funds from the EU are scarce. The NCs are therefore encouraged to look into internal funding sources and also use their own channels into relevant EU bodies to lobby for establishment of a funding structure for long-term funding of PGR conservation.
7. Countries/institutions fully supportive of the AEGIS principles, but facing financial or technical difficulties in their implementation at the national/institutional level, are encouraged to include their selected accessions in the European Collection and simultaneously seek support from ECPGR.
8. WGs should bring the issue of potential services offered by AMs into their agenda and actively inventory both “needs for services” and “offers of services” among AMs.

Outcome 2 – EURISCO

9. The Steering Committee (SC) agreed that EURISCO training activities should be a regular annual activity of the Documentation and Information (Doc&Info) WG, funded from available money within the Grant Scheme during the remaining part of Phase IX. This provision will not exclude the Doc&Info WG from the possibility to submit proposals under the next Calls of the Grant Scheme
10. The EURISCO Coordinator with the Doc&Info WG are encouraged to carry out a users’ survey (Activity 2.4.1 of the ECPGR Objectives).

Outcome 3 – In situ / On-farm

11. NCs and WG members are encouraged to promote related activities at country level.
12. The ECPGR Concepts for *in situ* conservation of crop wild relatives in Europe and for on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA should be offered to the EC for consideration (see decision 31).

Outcome 4 – Resources

13. Since funding from current EU sources have proven so far to be inaccessible for the type of activities which ECPGR is carrying out, there is a need for another type of funding structure within the EC. The NCs are therefore encouraged to bring this need

up during relevant meetings at the EC and with EC representatives, and lobby for recognition of ECPGR as an EU platform for conservation and use of PGR.

14. A communication and public relation strategy should be developed in three steps:
 - a. Secretariat to prepare a draft outline indicating the target groups (general public, scientific community and policy makers) of the strategy and the main messages that should be communicated.
 - b. A Task Force composed of G. Đurić, J. Weibull and S. Csörgő to prepare a draft strategy whereby the messages targeting three different groups should be communicated, to be circulated for comments to the SC.
 - c. Professional inputs for the implementation of the strategy could be sought for.

Outcome 5 – Users

15. When planning germplasm evaluation activities, WGs should focus on crop improvement needs and always consider including breeders in these activities.
16. Collect Private Public Partnership examples at national level and place them as a collective exercise on the ECPGR website.

Evaluation of WG Chairs

17. Based on the evaluation results, all the WG Chairs are reconfirmed in their role until the end of Phase IX.
18. Some WG Chairs have still not submitted their reports despite reminders from the Secretariat. All Chairs should be requested to report on time henceforth.
19. WG members' evaluation results should be shared with their respective Chair.
20. All workload should not be put on the shoulders of WG Chairs. The NCs should encourage the WG members in their respective countries to be more active, as appropriate.

Objectives of ECPGR

21. The SC will be invited to comment and/or endorse the amendments to the Objectives of ECPGR Phase IX suggested by the Secretariat in the Mid-term Report.

Recommendations for Phase X

Objectives of ECPGR

22. The logframe document "Objectives of ECPGR Phase IX" should be revised and updated under the leadership of the Secretariat, with inputs from the SC. The document "ECPGR Objectives for Phase X" will be tabled as background document for endorsement at the End-of-Phase IX SC meeting.

Mode of operation of Phase X

23. ExCo/Secretariat should prepare a proposal for the Mode of Operation of Phase X. It is suggested to introduce two budget lines of similar amounts, one exclusively dedicated to meetings and one to "other actions" according to the following general principles:
 - a. Meetings should be planned in order to allow proactive Working Group members to establish collaboration for action. The most important crop collections and crop distribution areas of given gene pools should be represented in the meetings, as far as possible. Meetings should be organized

according to criteria of efficiency and cost-effectiveness, also merging different WGs and taking advantage of synergies with other meetings and fora (EUCARPIA, COST, etc.). Organization of meetings should be made in collaboration between WG Chairs and the Secretariat and a country quota system should guarantee a balanced participation.

- b. Additional actions should be funded through the Grant Scheme based on selection of proposals. In this case, the 75:25 ratio 'meetings' vs. 'other actions' will no longer apply.

WG activities

24. ECPGR objectives for Phase X should enable WGs to undertake an ample range of activities, in particular expanded to:
 - a. Engaging more with users – through supporting use of the collections, e.g. through encouraging WGs to plan and propose pre-breeding activities;
 - b. Defining their respective roles within global crop conservation strategies (in liaison with other relevant players – Crop Trust, others).
 - c. Investigate the level of availability and distribution of PGR material conserved in the member countries.

EURISCO training

25. A training component for EURISCO should not have a separate budget line, but rather the host of EURISCO should include training costs within the overall EURISCO budget for Phase X.

Documentation of in situ conservation

26. Based on the agreement reached at the Doc&Info meeting in Prague (2014) to include in EURISCO data of *in situ* CWR conserved in genetic reserves, representatives from the Wild Species Conservation in Genetic Reserves WG, the Doc&Info WG and selected Crop WGs should develop an agreed minimum data exchange format on the basis of existing *in situ* descriptor lists.
27. Further discussion on inclusion of on-farm data in EURISCO should take place as part of the implementation of the ECPGR *Concept for on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA*, once agreed. The On-farm Conservation and Management and Doc&Info WGs should be involved in this discussion.

Collaboration on PGR policy issues

28. The need for advice on PGR policy issues, with the possibility to develop consensus positions, has often surfaced in the ECPGR circles. NCs are invited to offer names of policy experts who would be available to be included in an ECPGR Policy mailing list where they could be approached for advice and opinions on issues as these may arise.

Fundraising

29. In preparation for the decision to be taken at the End-of-Phase SC meeting on the budget for Phase X, and in parallel with the public relations and communication strategy under development, NCs should explore possible sources of funding for ECPGR, e.g. as follows:
 - a. Lobby for increasing budget at national level (also highlighting the ECPGR contribution to Sustainable Development Goals);

- b. Explore possibilities for voluntary contributions;
- c. Explore possibilities for input in kind contributions;
- d. Explore crowd funding and other innovative funding.

Procedure to define future ECPGR hosting arrangements

30. The mandate was given to the ExCo to negotiate with Bioversity and IPK for continued hosting arrangements respectively of the Secretariat and of EURISCO during Phase X and present a proposed procedure with related costs to the Steering Committee for consideration and possible adoption.

ECPGR Strategy for PGRFA in Europe

31. As a follow-up to the conclusion of the EU Preparatory Action, the ExCo/Secretariat (in consultation with available NCs) should send a letter including a *chapeau* explaining what ECPGR is, reflecting the interests of both EU and non-EU countries of ECPGR, and requesting a follow-up to the EU/COM and to the European Parliament. The letter should include the following items:
 - Propose the development of an EU Agrobiodiversity Strategy
 - Propose the development of an EU Programme for conservation and sustainable use of PGRFA
 - Notify the EU/COM officially of the ECPGR Concepts for *in situ* conservation of crop wild relatives in Europe and for on-farm conservation and management of PGRFA, to be taken into consideration when developing the PGRFA Programme
 - Send a list of recommendations to the EU/COM for further consideration, including:
 - ✓ Offer ECPGR elements such as AEGIS, EURISCO, the Secretariat and experts/Working Groups for implementing the EU Programme for PGRFA;
 - ✓ Express its interests for the future Research Infrastructure area and start a discussion within the plant genetic resources community and with members of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) for which areas they should support topics to be included in future project calls of the EU;
 - ✓ Propose the establishment of an ERA-NET for PGRFA for which ECPGR could play the role of the ERA-NET Coordinator.

ECPGR and the Treaty/Nagoya Protocol

32. It is recommended that all EPGR member countries, as appropriate and in line with national legislation, use the SMTA for distribution of both Annex I and non-Annex I PGRFA accessions independently of whether material is conserved in *ex situ* collections or held *in situ*.

ANNEX I. HELPER SHEET

Issues for Group discussion (1 June 2016)

Each Group can choose which issues to discuss, based on the interest of the participants. Conclusions should be compiled by rapporteurs in the form of proposed recommendations or decisions, to be approved in plenary session.

PHASE IX

- 1) SC agreed that EURISCO training activities should be a regular annual activity of the Doc&Info WG, with a budget line of its own for the remaining part of Phase IX. Is it acceptable that the Doc&Info WG maintains the eligibility to submit other Activity proposals under the next Calls of the Grant Scheme?
- 2) How can fundraising for ECPGR be implemented (Phases IX and X)? Should this be focused on lobbying at the EU level, at national level, both or by other means? Which practical actions are recommended?
- 3) Preparation of a communication and public relation strategy. How to go about it? Who should be the target and who should be responsible for the preparation? Based on which resources?
- 4) How to alleviate the workload of the WG Chairs/facilitate their leading tasks? It has been proposed either to identify one Working Group coordinator in each country and/or to ask the NCs to monitor/encourage the pro-activeness of WG members in their respective countries.
- 5) Implementation of AEGIS is slow. Is this a problem of time and resources or is there any problem with the concept that should be addressed? Please provide specific suggestions on how to resolve defined problems.

PHASE X

- 6) Mode of operation of Phase X: it should be amended on the basis of Phase IX experience. The ExCo is prepared to present a detailed proposal at the End-of-Phase meeting. Which elements should be considered for amendment (appointment of Chairs, WG numbers and structure, Grant Scheme formula, country quota, other procedures)?
- 7) European crop conservation (and use) plans. Should the WGs invest energy into organizing the implementation of existing crop strategies (European component) or developing global strategies for crops of specific European interest?
- 8) Capacity building. Should a specific budget line be allocated for training (documentation, genebank quality system, other)?
- 9) ECPGR Outcome 2 refers to including *in situ* and on-farm data into EURISCO. How can this area be developed?
- 10) PGR policy issues may deserve a forum for analysis and discussion at the ECPGR SC level (e.g.: access legislation, safety-duplication policy; access to *in situ* material; relationship with Treaty, Trust, Botanic Gardens, etc.; lobbying at EU level for fund-raising; seed legislation, distribution to users, etc.). Is there a need/interest for a permanent ECPGR forum or a temporary task Force?
- 11) Do the ECPGR Objectives require amendments/additions?

ANNEX II. AGENDA

Fourteenth meeting of the ECPGR Steering Committee 31 May – 2 June 2016, Višegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Monday, 30 May 2016

14:00 – 18:00 Meeting of the Executive Committee (ExCo)

Arrival of participants. No dinner has been organized for this evening

17:00 – 20:00 Registration in hotel lobby

Tuesday, 31 May 2016

Registration

8:00 – 8:30 Conference venue at Hotel “Andrićgrad”, Višegrad

Opening (*Chair: E. Thörn*)

8:30 – 9:00 Opening statements by representatives of the host country

9:00 – 9:15 Adoption of the Agenda

Report on Phase IX (*Chair: G.Djuric*)

9:15 – 9:45 Technical and financial report of Phase IX (*L. Maggioni*)

9:45 – 10:15 Discussion

10:15 – 10:45 Coffee break

10:45 – 11:15 Report from the ExCo on progress made during Phase IX, including evaluation of Working Group Chairs (*Chair: E. Thörn*)

11:15 – 11:30 Results of the evaluation of the proposals submitted under the Third Call (*R. De Salvador*)

11:30 – 12:30 Discussion

12:30 – 14:00 Lunch

Planning for Phase X (*Chair: J. Weibull*)

14:00 – 14:30 Recommendations from the ExCo on Phase X (*E. Thörn*)

14:30 – 14:45 Procedure to define future ECPGR hosting arrangements (*F. Begemann*)

14:45 – 15:45 Round-the-table perspective and strategy on funding for Phase X

15:45 – 16:15 Coffee break

16:15 – 16:30 Wrap-up on decisions of the day (*E. Thörn*)

16:30 – 17:00 Discussion and approval of decisions

17:00 *End of meeting (no dinner organized)*

Wednesday, 1 June 2016

ECPGR Strategy for PGRFA (*Chair: M. Lateur*)

- 9:00 – 9:30 ECPGR Strategy for PGRFA in Europe (*F. Begemann*)
 9:30 – 10:00 The Svalbard Seed Vault and collaboration with ECPGR (*Å. Asdal*)
 10:00 – 10:30 Discussion
- 10:30 – 11:00 *Coffee break*

ECPGR and the Nagoya Protocol (*Chair: R. De Salvador*)

- 11:00 – 11:30 Implementing the Nagoya Protocol in Europe (*A. Kozłowska, DG ENV*)
 11:30 – 12:00 Nagoya Protocol and the Multilateral System in Europe (*S. Bhatti, International Treaty*)
 12:00 – 12:30 How can ECPGR navigate in the Nagoya/MLS landscape? (*T.J.L. van Hintum*)
 12:30 – 13:00 Discussion
- 13:00 – 14:30 *Lunch*

Group discussions (*Chairs: ExCo members*)

- 14:30 – 16:00 Four groups are formed to openly discuss any relevant ECPGR issue and bring proposals to the attention of the plenary
Suggested items: AEGIS, EURISCO, ECPGR objectives, ECPGR Strategy on PGRFA in Europe, etc.
- 16:00 – 16:30 *Coffee break*
- 16:30 – 17:30 Reports from rapporteurs (*15' each*)
 17:30 – 18:00 Wrap-up on decisions of the day (*E. Thörn*)
 18:00 – 18:30 Discussion and approval of decisions
- 20:00 *Social dinner*

Thursday, 2 June 2016

Collaborations (*Chair: E. Thörn*)

- 08:30 – 09:30 NGOs (*A. Bourqui*)
 ESA (*S. Csörgö*)
 EUCARPIA (*S. Kell*)
- 10:00 – 12:30 Study tour on the Drina river
- 13:00 – 14:00 *Lunch*

Conclusion (*Chair: E. Thörn*)

- 15:00 – 15:45 Reading of meeting's report
 15:45 – 17:45 Discussion and approval of report
 17:45 – 18:00 Concluding remarks of the meeting
- 18:00 *End of meeting (no dinner organized)*

Friday, 3 June 2016

Departure of participants

ANNEX III. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS***Fourteenth meeting of the ECPGR Steering Committee
31 May – 2 June 2016, Višegrad, Bosnia and Herzegovina*****National Coordinators**

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