

Report of the Steering Committee

Twelfth Meeting

14-16 December 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia





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Bioversity International is part of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, which works to reduce hunger, poverty and environmental degradation in developing countries by generating and sharing relevant agricultural knowledge, technologies and policies. This research, focused on development, is conducted by a Consortium of 15 CGIAR centres working with hundreds of partners worldwide and supported by a multi-donor Fund (<http://www.bioversityinternational.org>; <http://www.cgiar.org>; <http://cgiarconsortium.cgxchange.org>; www.cgiarfund.org). Bioversity has its headquarters in Maccarese, near Rome, Italy, with offices in more than 20 other countries worldwide. The organization operates through four programmes: Diversity for Livelihoods, Understanding and Managing Biodiversity, Global Partnerships, and Commodities for Livelihoods.

The international status of Bioversity is conferred under an Establishment Agreement which, by January 2010, had been signed by the Governments of Algeria, Australia, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chile, China, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Greece, Guinea, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Slovakia, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda and Ukraine.

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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. 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 nine networks in which activities are carried out through a number of permanent working groups or through ad hoc actions. The ECPGR networks deal with either groups of crops (cereals; forages; fruit; oil and protein crops; sugar, starch and fibre crops; vegetables) or general themes related to plant genetic resources (documentation and information; *in situ* and on-farm conservation; inter-regional cooperation). Members of the working groups and other scientists from participating countries carry out an agreed workplan with their own resources as inputs in kind to the Programme.

The geographical designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of Bioversity or the CGIAR concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Similarly, the texts and taxonomic definitions in these proceedings reflect the views of the respective authors and not necessarily those of the compilers or their institutions.

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Opening session

(Chair: Daniela Benediková)

The meeting was opened by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Zsolt Simon, who welcomed the participants of the Twelfth Steering Committee Meeting of ECPGR to the Slovak Republic.

Welcome statements were also made by Emile Frison, Director General of Bioversity International, and Lorenzo Maggioni, ECPGR Coordinator.

Report on the outcome of the External Review by the Chair of the Panel

Thomas Gass, Chair of the Independent External Review Panel, addressed the meeting with an introduction of the findings of the Panel¹, which had concluded the Independent External Review of ECPGR during July 2010. He advised that the type of vehicle to choose for the effective management and operation of ECPGR is determined by the goal to be reached, depending on the level of ambition. Therefore, if the purpose of ECPGR remains, as in past phases, to facilitate long-term *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation and to increase utilization of plant genetic resources in Europe, then the responsibility and accountability for this activity rest fully with the national programmes while ECPGR plays only the supportive role of ensuring more efficiency and synergies. In this case, the outcomes to be expected during the next 15 years are likely to be modest. On the other hand, the Review Panel felt that ECPGR has the potential to take more responsibility for the conservation and use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture (PGRFA), and that it should shoulder this responsibility by, among others, establishing more accountability among its members.

The rationale for more responsibility and accountability within ECPGR derives from the changes in the legal framework (in particular, the International Treaty on PGRFA) and the geo-political context in Europe. ECPGR has already started moving in this direction and recorded initial achievements; AEGIS is an example of commitment to more accountability. PGRFA users are not constrained by national boundaries since they can access the regional and global “market” for genetic resources. Therefore, a coherent regional offer of such resources will enhance PGRFA utilization and, concomitantly, the ability to attract funds for maintenance, evaluation and documentation of collections. Outcomes and outputs should be formulated in terms of, for example, contribution to the goal of increasing the competitiveness of European breeders through better use of the European collections. However, to achieve this, more authority and resources would be needed for the regional programme, and its *modus operandi* would also need to be adapted.

Bioversity’s response to the specific recommendations of the Review

Emile Frison presented Bioversity’s response to the Report of the External Review of ECPGR. Bioversity welcomed the overall direction of the recommendations: the evolution of ECPGR into a fully institutionalized programme/network and its concomitant taking on of strategic responsibilities for the conservation and use of plant genetic resources in Europe by ensuring, in particular, more accountability among its members. Bioversity has observed ECPGR’s evolution in this direction over the past decade. This transformation has come about in close consultation with and support from Bioversity. Consequently, Bioversity welcomed this development and offered its further support, without reservation.

The above-mentioned institutionalization of ECPGR includes important aspects such as the provision of a platform to the European Union and its Commission for coordinating

¹ The Independent External Review Panel was composed of Thomas Gass, Marianne Lefort and Orlando de Ponti.

PGRFA-related activities, agenda setting and overseeing the implementation of agreed workplans of priority activities for conserving and facilitating the use of these genetic resources.

Given the increasingly recognized relationship between the different sectors of genetic resources – crop, forest and animal – and the synergies that can be generated when these are managed in a holistic manner, Bioversity offers its legal and technical expertise towards an evolutionary process that would, in the long term, integrate all these sectors using a natural approach.

Bioversity regarded the proposed function of an Executive Director as a step towards the facilitation of this collaborative process and supported the proposed creation of such a position, especially if it were to serve all sectors of genetic resources. Such an approach would ensure the transfer of lessons learnt in one sector to the others. Furthermore, it could be assumed that the European Commission would welcome a closer collaboration, or even some form of strategic coordination, between these three principal components of agricultural biodiversity. It would also strengthen the position of each Network in negotiations with the Commission by playing an increasingly important role in the coordination and implementation of European responsibilities by the coordinated Networks.

Since management of genetic resources information is one of the priority areas of Bioversity's strategy, and given that EURISCO is one of the key components of the global information system (GENESYS) that is being developed, Bioversity will continue its engagement in the further development and operation of EURISCO as a significant contribution to ECPGR.

Bioversity is keen to continue hosting the ECPGR Secretariat. However, due to the changes in the funding mechanism and rules of the CGIAR, this can only be done on the basis of full costing of the hosting arrangement in the long term. Consequently, some of the contributions in kind made by Bioversity until now would no longer be possible without financial compensation. Furthermore, considering the future institutionalization of ECPGR, including the possible creation of an Executive Committee and the appointment of an Executive Director, Bioversity is prepared to review current hosting arrangements, administrative procedures, reporting lines and the status of the Secretariat and to bring these in line with the spirit of the Review Report.

Briefing on the status of ECPGR Phase VIII

Lorenzo Maggioni briefed participants on the current status of ECPGR in Phase VIII, starting with the status of membership and outstanding contributions, followed by a report on past and planned meetings and the use of country quotas. A few issues related to the implementation of the Second Part of Phase VIII were raised (planning of meetings of the Network Coordinating Group, Steering Committee and others), which were to be discussed in the last session (see further, "Other ECPGR items related to Phase VIII"). The status of expenditure of Phase VII funds was reported. Activities carried out within the Networks were briefly summarized and the AEGIS milestones that had been reached were enumerated.

General discussion

During the general discussion, the participants expressed the need to reach consensus on the principles on which ECPGR should be based, rather than on the details of the future mode of operation. Consensus was found on the need to establish an Executive Committee, as it was perceived that the body currently lacked an authority to take decisions between meetings of the Steering Committee.

There was also agreement that ECPGR could be accountable for reaching not only national but also regional targets of conservation and use. As an example, AEGIS has already gone far beyond national conservation responsibilities and is clearly moving towards a regional approach.

According to the participants, regional responsibility in Europe also involved giving due attention to the weaker countries in Europe for PGR management. In the future, ECPGR should also become more visible with the breeding community.

Objectives related to conservation and increased utilization should still be at the heart of ECPGR activities. The central component to achieve conservation is AEGIS (establishment of a rational system of conservation), while EURISCO and the future crop portals are tools to increase utilization. Material in AEGIS should be screened, perhaps through projects. How ECPGR intended to tackle *in situ* conservation and management should be discussed and a decision be taken.

It was also clarified that upscaling conservation and use to the regional level did not mean taking responsibilities away from countries, but in fact adding a regional level of responsibility.

Parallel sessions

The meeting split into four groups, each of them addressing four subjects, under the guidance of a facilitator. Thomas Gass facilitated the discussion on “ECPGR objectives”, Bert Visser on “Institutionalizing ECPGR and its management”, Eva Thörn on “Hosting arrangements” and Dainis Rungis on “Finding resources for ECPGR”.

Plenary session: reports of the parallel sessions

(Chair: Zofia Bulińska)

The facilitators of the four working groups reported in plenary on the parallel sessions. Discussions following each of the four presentations provided the elements for the decisions taken and the road map, as outlined in the next chapter of this report.

ECPGR objectives

Lorenzo Maggioni, on behalf of Thomas Gass who had to leave, presented the results of discussions on “ECPGR objectives” in the parallel sessions. A draft logical framework, or logframe in short, for the prioritization of the ECPGR objectives was compiled following the proposal made by the four parallel working groups.

After discussion in plenary, the Steering Committee agreed on ECPGR’s long-term goal and six outcomes that could be attributed to ECPGR for one Phase, as follows:

Long-term goal	National, Sub-regional and Regional Programmes in Europe rationally and effectively conserve <i>ex situ</i> and <i>in situ</i> PGRFA and increase their utilization.
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. AEGIS is operational and accessions in AEGIS are characterized and evaluated.2. The functionality of EURISCO meets users' expectations, and the quantity and quality of its data are enhanced, including <i>in situ</i> and on-farm data.3. <i>In situ</i> and on-farm conservation and management concepts are agreed.4. Commitment and regular resources of national governments are sustained or increased; commitments and resources to ECPGR from the European Commission and other potential donors are increased.5. Relations with users of germplasm are strengthened.6. Organizational structure and secretarial support are adequate to effectively sustain ECPGR's operations.

A number of indicators, important assumptions and outputs had also been proposed and presented, but the Steering Committee decided that these need to be further elaborated as part of its workplan in preparation for its next meeting.

Institutionalization

Bert Visser presented the results of the discussions on "Institutionalizing ECPGR and its management" in the parallel sessions. The working groups took into consideration the roles of the Steering Committee and the ECPGR Secretariat, and the relationship with the hosting institution.

As **strengths of the Steering Committee** were identified:

1. All ECPGR member countries are represented;
2. It is the ultimate decision-making body;
3. It has high technical and diverse competence; and
4. It has vision and oversight on ECPGR.

However, the SC's weaknesses were:

1. Absence of leadership and lack of debate;
2. Difficulties in decision-making and differences in perspectives;
3. Lack of rules of procedure;
4. Lack of analytical and strategic discussions;
5. Lack of clear and specific priorities;
6. Lack of proper indicators and milestones to measure success;
7. Uncertainty about the mandate of individual members;
8. Limited options for inter-session decision-making;
9. High cost of SC meetings;
10. Routine operation; and
11. Limited interaction with the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture and the International Treaty.

As **strength's of the Secretariat** were identified:

1. Handling of administration and finance;
2. Organization of meetings;
3. Expertise on PGRFA;
4. Support for EU project preparation;
5. Quality of (Working Group) reports; and
6. Ability to respond to ad hoc issues.

However, the Secretariat's weaknesses were:

1. Absence of authority;
2. Limited interaction with the SC between sessions;
3. Lack of guidance from the SC;
4. Poor prioritization of issues by the SC;
5. Lack of outreach;
6. Mainly internal role/low visibility;
7. Lack of initiatives, focus mainly on routine operations;
8. Lack of capacity;
9. Being understaffed;
10. Insufficient information from the Secretariat on funding opportunities, PGRFA meetings and major publications.

Regarding the relationship with Bioversity International, the current hosting organization, the following strengths were identified:

1. Good scientific environment;
2. Good back-up services;
3. Science, policy/legal, logistics;
4. International, recognized status of Bioversity;
5. Continuity, proof of effectiveness;
6. Location in Rome (IT/FAO); and
7. No cash-flow problems in ECPGR operations through advances being paid.

However, the weaknesses of the Secretariat were:

1. Staffing is expensive on full-cost recovery basis;
2. No clear contract that spells out services provided and under which conditions;
3. Dual loyalty of the Secretariat to the SC and to hosting institution;
4. Rather low visibility of ECPGR vis-à-vis Bioversity;
5. (Potential) divergent mandates/interests. Benefits of hosting exist for both ECPGR and Bioversity; they were recognized but not spelled out.

The following recommendations were made:

- ***Executive Committee***

An Executive Committee Bureau of five persons consisting of SC members, elected on a rotational basis, should be defined with titles of Chair and co-Chairs. These positions should be indemnified at a very low cost (limited only to travel and lodging costs for the team). Their mandate should be to address all SC decisions/resolutions, to prepare the SC meetings, to offer guidance to the Secretariat, to consider strategic issues and any other business, but not to deal with financial issues above € 5000.

- ***Executive Secretary / Director***

Two alternative titles were suggested: "Executive Secretary" and "Executive Director". The decision to assign this position should be budget-neutral and could simply involve a formalization of the position of the Secretary. The Secretary should be empowered, in a way to be spelled out in the "Rules of Procedure". This position should be "external", support good visibility of ECPGR and include the responsibility of raising funds and providing strategic inputs to the SC. The Secretary should report only to the SC/Executive Committee.

- **Rules of Procedure**

A minimum set of rules of procedure should be established on: the role and mandate of the Executive Committee and the Executive Secretary, monitoring expenses and decision-making regarding the budget and possible sanctions for members with outstanding contributions.

- **Relationships**

The relationship with the European Union should be strengthened, in relation to the possible successor programme to Council Regulation (EC) No 870/2004 (AGRI GENRES) and for possible funding from the EU. It should be kept in mind that all ECPGR members should remain equal within ECPGR, without creating differences between EU and non-EU members. Relationships should also be strengthened with the International Treaty, EUCARPIA and the European Seed Association.

- **ECPGR structure**

The structure could be simplified. Various options were considered: (a) keep the Networks, dissolve the Working Groups; b) keep the Working Groups, dissolve the Networks; c) maintain only three Networks (*ex situ*, *in situ* and information/documentation). Ad hoc Working Groups/ad hoc Task Forces could be established. Meetings could be combined in time and venue, and they could be self-organized and at least partially self-funded.

Hosting arrangements

Eva Thörn presented the results of the discussions on “Hosting arrangements” in the parallel sessions. It was reported that while continuity was important, change also provided opportunities. ECPGR, with its 30 years of existence, itself guaranteed the required continuity.

The current hosting situation with Bioversity was appreciated. Pros and cons were considered as follows:

Pros (not necessarily unique to Bioversity)

- In-house technical and legal PGR expertise exists
- Neutral ground
- Politically neutral
- Synergies, e.g. information channels
- Independent of national legislation and local employment regulations.

Cons

- International recruitment of staff is more costly
- A research institute providing only administrative services could create conflict in the future
- ECPGR is currently perceived as a Bioversity project by the outside world.

As a general remark, it was stated that other options for hosting arrangements should not be excluded; the preferred option would depend on the legal status of ECPGR, which should be analysed thoroughly. Bioversity offered good value for the invested money, but would this hold also in the future? ECPGR needed a certain degree of independence in order to be competitive and visible to funding agencies.

Regarding the cost implications of hosting, the participants were informed that hosting at Bioversity would increase the ECPGR total budget by approximately 15% (due to full cost

recovery on services provided). Bioversity affirmed that it was prepared to cover the development and operational costs for EURISCO. It remained unclear whether Bioversity would value ECPGR as an economic asset in the future and, if so, how would that be reflected in the hosting arrangement?

At the same time, selecting other hosting options and the change process itself might cost more than remaining with Bioversity. Rome is also an advantageous location, given the presence of Bioversity, FAO, the Global Crop Diversity Trust and the Treaty Secretariat.

Tendering was also considered as a cost-efficient way to identify an appropriate host for the ECPGR Secretariat.

Regarding EURISCO, it was considered that including it in the development of a global documentation system was a positive step. At the same time, giving EURISCO (and other regional systems as well) a separate “window” was useful and necessary, considering, *inter alia*, the special functions related to AEGIS. Participants also felt that influence of the Steering Committee on the further development of EURISCO needs to be improved and that it should be clarified that EURISCO is under the ECPGR governance. Furthermore, the role and use of the CCDBs should be elucidated.

A number of new situations were identified, including changes in Bioversity’s priorities and the termination of some traditional contributions to ECPGR; however, some in-kind contributions could still be provided. The position of the Director of the Regional Office for Europe would be terminated at the end of 2011. Production of the *Newsletter for Europe* might have to be rearranged.

The cost and consequences of possibly splitting ECPGR’s functions and key components (e.g. to separate the hosting of the Secretariat, EURISCO and AEGIS), should be analysed, and a Task Force should be established for this purpose.

The following concluding remarks were made:

- Objectives, institutionalization, hosting and financing were interrelated;
- The final decision on hosting arrangements should not be taken before all possible options have been investigated and appraised;
- A Task Force should be appointed (as part of the road map) during the current meeting and be charged with the preparation of an “Options paper”;
- Terms of reference should be developed by the SC; and
- The discussion on the “Options paper” by the SC could be followed by a tendering procedure.

As a final assumption, it was felt that Bioversity might still be a preferable hosting option.

Finding resources for ECPGR

Dainis Rungis presented the results of the discussions on “Finding resources for ECPGR” in the parallel sessions.

Consensus was expressed on the opportunity to position ECPGR as the Pan-European “representative/administrator” for PGR, specifically aiming at becoming part of the implementing procedures of a renewed GENRES programme. There was also agreement on the establishment of an Executive Committee to promote ECPGR vis-à-vis the EC and other international organizations and national bodies, highlighting the usefulness of ECPGR and its actual and potential regional synergies. Such promotion efforts could yield more secure funding from regional, national and other sources.

The SC did not express support for an increase in national contributions to ECPGR. But it felt that some funds could be freed as a result of a streamlining exercise (focusing on specific goals, such as targeting potential users of germplasm/information). Participants also

thought that abrupt changes in the ECPGR structure and hosting arrangements could make it more difficult to secure national contributions.

Possible cost reductions could be achieved by outsourcing tasks and increasing in-kind contributions, where possible.

Additional funding was thought to be possible from the following donors:

- European Commission
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- Global Crop Diversity Trust (for specific projects/needs)
- Other regions (e.g. crop centres of diversity).

Collaboration with major breeders and nature conservation agencies (e.g. botanic gardens) should be strengthened.

Development of a road map for the implementation of agreed recommendations

(Chair: Geert Kleijer)

This section consolidated a number of discussion points and the SC took the following decisions.

Establishment of the Executive Committee

An Executive Committee (ExCo) with a Chair and four Vice-Chairs would be established and its members selected by the SC. The Chair should be selected by the members of the ExCo and the selected Chair should preside at the next meeting of the SC. The members of the Executive Committee should remain in charge for 5 years, with one member being replaced each year by a newly elected member. The Executive Committee members should be elected among the SC members, so that sub-regional representation is ensured (North, West, Central, East and South), but with some flexibility. The ECPGR Coordinator would be an ex officio member of the ExCo, but without voting rights.

The final responsibility for the programme would always remain with the Steering Committee.

The Executive Committee should develop its Interim Terms of Reference and submit them to the SC for approval. The Executive Committee could be supported by Task Forces addressing specific elements.

Preparation of an “Options paper”

The Executive Committee would be asked to prepare an “Options paper”, addressing the following items:

- Elaboration of the ECPGR objectives, based on the long-term goal and outcomes agreed in this meeting (see above)
- Legal status of ECPGR (including pros and cons)
- Establishing the position of Executive Director/Executive Secretary and defining the Terms of Reference (including pros and cons)
- Rules of Procedure (elaborating a first draft)
- Internal ECPGR operational structure (including pros and cons)
- Hosting arrangements (including pros and cons)
- Any cost implications of the various options.

Expertise of the SC and the Networks/Working Groups should be mobilized to the extent possible while drafting the “Options paper”.

Definition of a road map

The next Steering Committee meeting would focus on a discussion of the “Options paper”. The 4-day meeting would be scheduled during the second half of 2012, leaving one year for developing the selected options before the end of Phase VIII.

Only a short session should be dedicated to evaluate the activities carried out by the Networks and Working Groups.

The finalized “Options paper” should be shared with the SC sufficiently in advance (4 months) of the SC meeting. Early drafts of the various sections of the “Options paper” should be shared with the SC to allow interactions between the Executive Committee and the SC throughout the formulation process.

The meeting of all Network Coordinating Groups was cancelled.

Relationship with the EC and the EU

Several ongoing activities of the EC were of interest to ECPGR, and there could well be opportunities for collaboration with various Directorates:

- DG SANCO. The ongoing revision of the European seed legislation could offer an opportunity for including in the new law a reference to the conservation of plant genetic resources as an important component of the entire chain from germplasm through to final varieties; this could establish a currently lacking legal framework for PGR, which would be useful for channelling national and regional funds.
- DG AGRI. The process of evaluation of the second GEN RES Programme during 2011 and the possible establishment thereafter of a third Programme of whatever nature should be closely followed and, where possible, influenced by ECPGR, which was felt to be in an ideal situation for becoming the implementing agency for such a Programme.
- RURAL DEVELOPMENT FUND. Resources available under the Fund, specifically those dedicated to *ex situ* and *in situ* PGRFA conservation, could also be utilized. These opportunities have been exploited with various degrees of success by a number of countries. However, these should not be seen as an alternative to the development of an EC programme specifically dedicated to genetic resources, such as GEN RES.
- DG RESEARCH. Lobbying should continue to ensure that PGRFA topics are included among the future calls of the Research Framework Programme.
- DG ENV. The SC should acquaint itself with the activities related to the conservation of biodiversity (such as consultation on access and benefit-sharing protocols), which could be coordinated with other genetic resources activities.

While National Coordinators of the EU countries were invited to pursue lobbying activities in their countries that could strengthen interaction between ECPGR and the EC/EU (e.g. within the framework of the “Standing Committee on Seeds” and the “Management Committee on the conservation, classification, collection and exploitation of genetic

resources in agriculture”), ECPGR’s actions towards the EU should be coordinated. It was agreed that the existing Task Force on EU matters would be revitalized and tasked with:

1. Preparation of a short strategy paper that would update the SC about happenings relevant to PGR in the various EC Directorates;
2. Prospection for establishing a contact with the lobbying community in Brussels and finding ways to approach policy-makers in an effective way;
3. Coordination across ECPGR of agreed initiatives to be undertaken with the EC.

The Task Force, composed of Jan Engels (replacing Jozef Turok), Paul Freudenthaler, Siegfried Harrer, Lars Landbo and Fernando Latorre, would organize itself for selecting its Chair and establishing a detailed workplan.

The Task Force should bear in mind that there should be no differentiation between EU and non-EU member countries of ECPGR in any proposed deliberation with the EU.

EURISCO

Following the expression of concerns regarding both the quality of EURISCO’s development activities and the empowerment of ECPGR as the owner and supervisor of these activities, the SC requested the Coordinator of the Documentation and Information Network to prepare a letter addressed to the Director General of Bioversity, in consultation with the ECPGR Secretariat. The letter, to be formulated in a constructive way, should seek clarification on the mentioned development activities of EURISCO and request that the ECPGR Secretariat be given full responsibility to supervise the EURISCO Coordinator and the EURISCO developer(s) at Bioversity.

Other ECPGR items related to Phase VIII

(Chair: Fernando Latorre)

The meeting discussed whether each Network should be given the authority to re-allocate its savings for additional Network activities, or whether unspent funds should be used for offsetting overspending by other Networks. The case in point was the organization of the meeting of the On-farm Conservation and Management Working Group: should it still take place, given that the corresponding Network had overspent its allocated funds. The holding of a Grain Legumes WG meeting was also discussed; the meeting planned for April 2010 had to be cancelled at the last minute, as participants could not travel due to the Icelandic volcano eruptions.

The ECPGR Secretariat informed the SC that a number of ECPGR member countries (Armenia, Belgium, France, Israel, FYR Macedonia and Malta) had not signed the Letter of Agreement (LoA) for Phase VIII and had not yet paid any contribution for this Phase. Even though the expected contributions from the above countries had been originally included in the ECPGR budget for Phase VIII, financial rules do not allow Bioversity to budget pledges that are not supported by written evidence. Therefore, the ECPGR budget would likely be reduced until these countries sign the LoA and/or pay their contributions for Phase VIII.

The following decisions were taken:

- A Grain Legumes WG meeting should be held during Phase VIII (subject to country quota), using the remaining funds of the Network;
- The second On-farm Conservation and Management WG meeting should be cancelled, due to overspending by the Network;

- The Umbellifer Crops WG meeting scheduled for March 2011 would take place only if, at least five participants confirmed by 20 January 2011 that they would attend;
- Savings made by the Networks when meetings or activities were carried out at lower cost than budgeted should be transferred to a Common Fund. Each Network would be eligible to request funds from this Common Fund for activities that address the new objectives of ECPGR. Detailed rules for the use of funds from the Common Fund should be proposed by the ECPGR Secretariat, in consultation with the Executive Committee.
- All the 43 ECPGR member countries would be able to continue using their country quota, regardless of whether or not they have already signed the LoA for Phase VIII and whether they have outstanding contributions. However, this situation would need to be regulated under the "Rules of procedure" to be drafted by the Executive Committee. In addition, a letter prepared by the Executive Committee would be sent by the ECPGR Secretariat on behalf of ECPGR, inviting those countries that have not paid their dues for more than 1 year or that have delayed their regular payments to settle their dues to ECPGR promptly.

The following recommendation was made:

- Upcoming Crop Working Group meetings were expected to reach practical achievements, specifically the definition of lists of accessions proposed for the European Collection and draft lists of crop-specific standards for conservation.

Election of the Executive Committee

The meeting elected the following members for the ECPGR Executive Committee:

Alvina Avagyan (Armenia)
 Geert Kleijer (Switzerland)
 Fernando Latorre (Spain)
 Silvia Străjeru (Romania)
 Merja Veteläinen (Finland)
 Ex officio: Lorenzo Maggioni (ECPGR Secretariat).

The elected members agreed to serve on the Executive Committee, provided no objections would be raised by their respective organizations at home. As G. Kleijer by his own submission, is available for only one year, he would be the first member to be replaced by rotation.

The Executive Committee would select the Chair and elaborate the rotation procedures. But each new member should be elected by the SC keeping in mind the sub-regional representation.

The SC wished success to the Executive Committee and encouraged it to request inputs from the other members of the SC whenever appropriate. While the precise terms of reference of the Executive Committee were not yet defined, the Executive Committee, particularly its Chair, was expected to represent ECPGR to the external world.

The Executive Committee members elected Geert Kleijer as the first Chair; he said he would, however, hand it over at the end of 2011.

Conclusion

Report of the meeting

The Secretariat agreed to draft the report of the meeting and circulate it to the SC for approval in January 2011.

Closing remarks

The Chair thanked the meeting's participants and the Secretariat for their constructive work and the local organizers, particularly Pavol Hauptvogel, for the excellent organization.

Annex A. Agenda

Twelfth Meeting of the ECPGR Steering Committee 14-16 December 2010, Bratislava, Slovakia

14 December 2010

Morning	(Chair: Daniela Benediková)
08:30 – 09:00	Opening session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening of the meeting by the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, Mr Zsolt Simon • Welcome from Bioversity International (Emile Frison) and ECPGR Secretariat (Lorenzo Maggioni)
09:00 – 09:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the outcome of the Independent External Review by the Chair of the Panel (Thomas Gass)
09:45 – 10:05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bioversity's response to the specific recommendations of the Review (E. Frison)
10:05 – 10:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing on the status of ECPGR Phase VIII (L. Maggioni)
<i>10:30 – 11:00</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:00 – 13:00	General discussion
<i>13:00 – 14:00</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
Afternoon	
14:00 – 16:00	Parallel sessions <p>Four parallel sessions (the SC splits into four groups, each will discuss all four subjects during 2 hours of discussion on each subject, and will be led by four subject facilitators). The subject facilitators will ensure that important suggestions and findings of the previous parallel session on a given subject will be taken forward to the next session(s) to thus achieve an accumulative effect and to allow the subject facilitator to present a consolidated result at the plenary session. The discussions on the four subjects should identify concrete steps that would become part of a road map.</p> <p>Subjects:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Institutionalizing ECPGR and its management (Bert Visser) 2. Objectives of ECPGR (Thomas Gass) 3. Hosting arrangements (Eva Thörn) 4. Finding resources for ECPGR (Dainis Rungis)
<i>16:00 – 16:30</i>	<i>Coffee break</i>
16:30 – 18:30	Parallel sessions continued (Subjects 1-4)

15 December

Morning**08:30 – 10:30** **Parallel sessions continued (Subjects 1-4)***10:30 – 11:00* *Coffee break***11:00 – 13:00** **Parallel sessions continued (Subjects 1-4)***13:00 – 14:30* *Lunch***Afternoon** (Chair: Zofia Bulinska)**14:30 – 16:30** **Plenary session: reports of the parallel sessions by the respective facilitators***16:30 – 17:00* *Coffee break***17:00 – 19:00** **General discussion***20.00* *Dinner at the hotel***16 December**

Morning (Chair: Geert Kleijer)**08:30 – 10:30** **Development of a road map for the implementation of agreed recommendations***10:30 – 11:00* *Coffee break***11:00 – 13:00** **Development of road map (continued)***13:00 – 14:00* *Lunch***Afternoon** (Chair: Fernando Latorre)**14:00 – 16:00** **Other ECPGR items related to Phase VIII**

- If required, revision of the workplan and budget for the remaining part of Phase VIII
- Any other business

16:00 – 16:30 *Coffee break***16:30 – 17:00** **Closing remarks**

Annex B. List of participants

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