

## Summary Report of the Genetic Resources Policy Committee (GRPC) Meetings AGM04, Mexico City

The reconstituted Genetic Resources Policy Committee (GRPC) met on February 16-18 and September 1-3, 2004. Over the course of those two meetings, and in follow-up work over the next six months leading up to the next meeting, the GRPC has addressed and will continue address a number of issues. This summary report provides details concerning five of those issues.

- 1) **On the issue of the possible unintended presence of transgenes in IARC's ex situ collection.** Partly in response to requests by recipients of samples from IARC's genebanks for guarantees of the absence of transgenes, and concerns expressed by advocacy groups, the GRPC in partnership with the Science Council held a three day technical workshop to address issues associated with the development of Centres' procedures for the collection and release of samples. Based on the report of that workshop, the GRPC developed a first draft of "Guiding Principles for the Development of Future Harvest Centres' Policies to Address the Possibility of Unintentional Presence of Transgenes in Ex situ Collections." The GRPC Secretariat is coordinating consultations with a wide range of stakeholders concerning the further development of the draft Guiding Principles. The GRPC will consider revisions based on those consultations at its next meeting, February 28 – March 2, 2005.
- 2) **Implementation of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.** The GRPC has considered a number of issues associated with supporting the successful implementation of the Treaty. In particular, the GRPC considered and agreed in principle on a policy for the development of an MTA to be used by Centres for the distribution of the products of their research. This policy was developed to ensure that the Treaty's benefit sharing provisions be applied to those materials. As recommended by the GRPC, the policy was adopted by the CDC and CBC. The GRPC will monitor the progress of the development of the draft MTA associated with this policy. In addition, the GRPC considered and recommended adoption of a draft of the agreement to be signed between the Centres and the Governing Body of the Treaty. The GRPC will monitor ongoing developments with respect to the potential revision and eventual adoption of that agreement by Centres.
- 3) **Promotion of farmers' rights and non-monetary benefit sharing through technology transfers under the International Treaty.** The GRPC will support the development of a questionnaire to be sent to the Centre Directors concerning their activities to promote a) farmers' rights and b) non-monetary benefit sharing in the form of technology transfers, as set out in the Treaty. The results of the survey will be synthesized and presented to the next meeting of the GRPC. The GRPC will analyze whether or not the conclusions of that paper call for policy-related responses.
- 4) **The state of intellectual property-related practices of the Future Harvest Centres.** The GRPC and the Science Council are jointly supporting the Central Advisory Service

on Intellectual Property (CAS) to undertake a study of Centres' use of proprietary technologies from outside the CG system. The study will include the collection of data concerning how much and what kinds of proprietary technologies Centres are relying on, the conditions under which they have agreed to use those technologies, their efforts to proactively ensure that products of their research that includes the use of those technologies can be made available to CG partners on preferential terms (or publicly available). The GRPC will analyze whether or not the conclusions of the paper call for the formulation of policy recommendations.

- 5) **Establishment of a world-wide germplasm safety duplication site at Svalbard, Norway.** Following a decision by the GRPC at its first session this year, the DG of IPGRI sent a letter on behalf of the GRPC and the Inter-Centre working Group – Genetic Resources (ICWG-GR) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway, inquiring whether Norway might be willing to evaluate and reconsider its previous offer to provide a facility in Svalbard for the safe storage of germplasm in permafrost conditions. In response to this request, the government of Norway has established a committee to assess the feasibility of developing this facility. The first report of the committee has confirmed that this is indeed a feasible course of action. The GRPC will continue to monitor this issue.

The GRPC will meet next, in a location to be determined, February 28-March 2, 2005.

GRPC  
October 15, 2004