

Opening CSO statement at GB5, Muscat, Oman

Thank you Chair for inviting us to speak.

I am speaking on behalf of peasant groups and civil society organisations present in the 5th Governing Body Meeting of the International Treaty. I will make a few brief comments and then pass on our intervention to my colleague from Via Campesina, the international peasant movement.

We appreciate the candid and honest reflections by the Chair and Executive Secretary in their reports. We wish to be part of the process to find a solution, contributing ideas and proposals about how the Treaty can realise its challenging goals.

We recognise that the Treaty and its Secretariat have contributed to improvements in the awareness of the central importance of PGRFA to food security, nutrition and environmental sustainability, and about technical developments in, for example, participatory plant breeding as a component of plant breeding strategies with a growing acceptance that farmers are plant breeders, and increased recognition of the role of community seed banks. But the Treaty needs to find ways to refocus its work on improving sustainable use, access, benefit sharing and, crucially, Farmers' Rights.

Since the Treaty's existence, recognition of Farmers' Rights has actually declined and there have been no improvements in germplasm flow to farmers. Resource grabbing, biopiracy and pressures to privatise public goods, including genetic resources in public genebanks, is increasing with native traits, including those found in Annex 1 crops, being continually patented in, for example, the USA, South Korea, Australia and the European Union.

While the 2008 food price crisis and climate change have provided opportunities to increase support for research into food and agriculture, this has not translated into support for advancing diversification of PGRFA on-farm and *in situ*, even though this will strengthen the resilience of farms and the food system.

The Treaty does not seem capable of challenging these negative trends and this raises questions about future of the Treaty. Therefore, as the Treaty prepares for its second Decade, we call on GB5 to implement a process that will lead to fundamental changes in the Treaty and its procedures, and will gain the support needed, to address the challenges.

I would now like to pass on to my colleague from Via Campesina

I am Guy Kastler from Via Campesina.

As part of this renewal process, we would insist that increased participation by representatives of farmers' social movements, and CSOs that support them, is essential for the future of the Treaty: it is as a result of the work of small-scale biodiversity-enhancing farmers, operating within the principles of food sovereignty, that we have the PGRFA which feed the world.

The rights of farmers to participate in decisions regarding PGRFA cannot be realised by governments selecting one or two NGOs to ask a few questions or to internet-based consultations, to which most farmers do not have access.

We recognise that Contracting Parties are responsible for decision making but we propose that the work of the Treaty would be greatly enhanced if the views of representatives of farmers' social movements, and the CSOs that support them, were better integrated into the debates in the Governing Body and in inter-sessional processes. Since GB4 in Bali, the engagement of farmers' social movements in your work has been difficult and benefits flowing through the Treaty to farmers organisations have been minimal.

In all the meetings of the GB we have organised ourselves and have presented our ideas and proposals on different agenda items but our contributions are marginalised to the end of your debates.

In many parts of the UN system, new ways of working with CSOs are being implemented, which address this deficit, including through the Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security, a process endorsed by governments in Rio+20. The CBD is developing an improved mechanism and the UN General Assembly is, this week, considering how UN bodies can better engage CSOs in normative decision-making processes.

While we accept that the Treaty needs to have clear rules - as an instrument which is legally-binding on governments - this should not prevent you from defining and implementing new rules for the participation of civil society organisations, and especially of farmers' representatives.

We call on the GB to put in place an improved mechanism for CSO participation in your processes.

Thank you, Chair.