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منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
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Food
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des
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et
l'agriculture

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de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

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TWENTY-SEVENTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Havana, Cuba, 22 to 26 April 2002

The International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture

1. The 1996 World Food Summit attributed great importance to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for achieving food security and sustainable agriculture. In the follow-up to the Summit, FAO member countries have completed the negotiations for the revision of the International Undertaking, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the Thirty-first FAO Conference has approved the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, whose objectives are “the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture, as well as a fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from the use of these resources”. The Treaty includes an article on Farmers’ Rights. All countries and regions are highly inter-dependent in relation to Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. The agriculture of the Latin American and the Caribbean region is highly dependent on the genetic resources of barley, cabbage, etc, sunflower and wheat, which originated in other regions of the world. On the other hand, crops such as potato and maize, which originated in this region, are of great importance for agricultural development in other parts of the world.

2. The Treaty establishes a Multilateral System of Facilitated Access and Benefit-sharing for key crops, and makes provision for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from their utilization. The Treaty will enter into force once ratified by forty countries. The Governing Body of the Treaty will be composed of those countries that have ratified it. A number of important provisions of the Treaty related to Material Transfer Agreements, Intellectual Property Rights, mechanisms for the sharing of benefits, and the financial strategy for the implementation priority activities, plans and programmes have been left to be developed by the first session of the Governing Body. The Director-General has written to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of each country, asking them to accelerate the ratification process, and, if possible, to ratify the Treaty before the Summit in June 2002.

3. The Regional Conference may wish to recognize that the adoption by the Thirty-first Session of the Conference of a binding International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, whose objectives are “the conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources for food and agriculture and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of

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their use, in harmony with the Convention on Biological Diversity, for sustainable agriculture and food security”, offers the region and the international community in general an important legal instrument dealing with resources on which food security depends. The Regional Conference may wish to recommend that countries ratify the Treaty soonest, possibly before the FAO Summit in June, as suggested by the Director-General, in order to ensure good regional representation in the first meeting of the Governing Body, where a number of crucial policy and financial provisions of the Treaty will be developed.