



C(Extr.)/20/5

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**INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR THE PROTECTION OF NEW VARIETIES OF PLANTS**  
GENEVA

**COUNCIL**

**Twentieth Extraordinary Session**  
**Geneva, April 11, 2003**

REPORT ON THE DECISIONS

*adopted by the Council*

Opening of the Session

1. The Council of the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV) held its twentieth extraordinary session in Geneva on April 11, 2003, under the chairmanship of Mr. Karl Olov Öster (Sweden), President of the Council.
2. The list of participants is reproduced in Annex I to this document.
3. The session was opened by the President who welcomed the participants.
4. The President extended a warm welcome to the Delegation of Belarus, a State which had become a member of UPOV on January 5, 2003. He also informed the Council of the accession of Hungary to the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention.

Adoption of the Agenda

5. The Council adopted the agenda, as proposed in document C(Extr.)/20/1, after having added to item 4 the examination of the conformity of the Decree on the Protection of New Plant Varieties of Viet Nam with the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention (document C(Extr.)/20/3). A new document, under agenda item 5, has been added concerning a recommendation for the adoption by the Council of the "Position of UPOV concerning Decision VI/5 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)" (document C(Extr.)/20/4).

Election of the Vice-President of the Council

6. The Vice Secretary-General introduced document C(Extr.)/20/2.
7. The Council elected unanimously Mrs. Enriqueta Molina Macías (Mexico) as Vice-President of the Council for a term beginning today and ending with the thirty-seventh ordinary session of the Council, on October 23, 2003.

Examination of the Conformity of the Legislation or Proposed Legislation of any State or Organization Having Submitted a Request Under Article 34(3) of the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention

*Socialist Republic of Viet Nam*

8. The Senior Legal Officer introduced document C(Extr.)/20/3.
9. The Council decided
  - (a) to advise the Government of Viet Nam that the Decree, in its main provisions, incorporates most of the substance of the 1991 Act, but that it still needs some clarifications and amendments, as provided in this document, in order to fully conform with the 1991 Act; once the above clarifications and amendments are incorporated in the Decree to the satisfaction of the Office of the Union, Viet Nam may deposit its instrument of accession to the 1991 Act;
  - (b) to request the Office of the Union to offer its assistance to the Government of Viet Nam in drafting the necessary clarifications and amendments to the Decree, and the preparation of a more accurate translation into one or more of the official languages of the Union.

Report by the President on the Work of the Sixty-Fifth Session of the Consultative Committee; Adoption of Recommendations, if any, Prepared by that Committee

10. The Council noted the oral report on the sixty-fifth session of the Consultative Committee, held on April 11, 2003, which had been devoted mainly to discussion of the financial situation of the Union and the preparation of the current session of the Council.
11. On the basis of a recommendation made by the Consultative Committee, the Council adopted document C(Extr.)/20/4, as modified by the Consultative Committee, which incorporates the “Position of UPOV concerning Decision VI/5 of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)” as reflected in Annex II to this document. The Council also took note of the accompanying letter, as modified by the Consultative Committee, which would be sent to the Secretariat of the CBD.
12. *The Council unanimously adopted this report at the close of its session.*

[Annex I follows]

ANNEXE I / ANNEX I / ANLAGE I / ANEXO I

I. MEMBRES / MEMBERS / VERBANDSMITGLIEDER / MIEMBROS

ALLEMAGNE / GERMANY / DEUTSCHLAND / ALEMANIA

Udo VON KRÖCHER, Präsident, Bundessortenamt, Postfach 61 04 40, 30627 Hannover (tel.: +49 511 9566603 fax: +49 511 956 6904 e-mail: Postfach.Praesident@bundessortenamt.de)

Michael KÖLLER, Leiter Rechtsreferat, Regierungsdirektor, Bundessortenamt, Osterfelddamm 80, 30627 Hannover (tel.: +49 511 95 66624 fax: +49 511 56 3362 / 95665 e-mail: michael.koeller@bundessortenamt.de)

ARGENTINE / ARGENTINA / ARGENTINIEN

Néstor FERNÁNDEZ, Responsable Semillas, Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Pesca y Alimentos (SAGPyA), Ministerio de la Producción, Paseo Colón 922, 3er piso, of. 302, 1063 Buenos Aires (tel.: +54 11 4349 2497 fax: +54 11 4349 2417 e-mail: nesfer@sagpya.minproduccion.gov.ar)

Marcelo LABARTA, Director de Registro de Variedades, ex-Instituto Nacional de Semillas, Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Pesca y Alimentos (SAGPyA), Ministerio de la Producción, Paseo Colón 922, 3er piso, of. 347, 1063 Buenos Aires (tel.: +54 11 4349 2445 fax: +54 11 4349 2444 e-mail: mlabar@sagyp.mecon.gov.ar)

AUSTRALIE / AUSTRALIA / AUSTRALIEN

Doug WATERHOUSE, Registrar, Plant Breeder's Rights Office, Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, P.O. Box 858, Canberra, ACT 2601 (tel.: +61 2 6272 3888 fax: +61 2 6272 3650 e-mail: doug.waterhouse@affa.gov.au)

AUTRICHE / AUSTRIA / ÖSTERREICH

Heinz-Peter ZACH, Referatsleiter für Saatgut und Sorten, Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft, Umwelt und Wasserwirtschaft, Stubenring 1, 1010 Wien (tel.: +43 1 711 002795 fax: +43 1 513 8722 e-mail: Heinz-Peter.Zach@bmlf.gv.at)

BÉLARUS / BELARUS / BELARÚS

Irina EGOROVA (Mrs.), First Secretary, Permanent Mission, 15, avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland (tel.: +41 22 7482450 fax: +41 22 7482451)

BELGIQUE / BELGIUM / BELGIEN / BÉLGICA

Camille VANSLEMBROUCK (Mme), Ingénieur, Office de la Propriété Intellectuelle,  
North Gate III, 5ème étage, 16, blvd. du Roi Albert II, 1000 Bruxelles  
(tel.: +32 2 2065158 fax: +32 2 2065750 e-mail: camille.vanslembrouck@mineco.fgov.be)

CANADA / KANADA / CANADÁ

Valerie SISSON (Ms.), Commissioner, Plant Breeders' Rights Office, Canadian Food  
Inspection Agency (CFIA), Camelot Court, 59, Camelot Drive, Nepean, Ontario K1A 0Y9  
(tel.: +1 613 225 2342 fax: +1 613 228 6629 e-mail: vsisson@inspection.gc.ca)

CHINE / CHINA

LÜ Bo, Division Director, DUS Test Division, Development Center for Science and  
Technology, Ministry of Agriculture, Building 18, Mai Zi Dian Street, Beijing 100026  
(tel.: +86 10 6592 5213 fax: +86 10 6592 5213 e-mail: lvbo@agri.gov.cn)

YANG Fengwei, Director, Division of Science and Technology, State Forestry  
Administration, No. 18 Hepingli East Street, Beijing 100714 (tel.: +86 10 84238700  
fax: +86 10 84239221 e-mail: yangfengwei@forestry.gov.cn)

ZHOU Jianren, Division Director, Department of Science & Technology, Office of Protection  
of New Varieties of Plants, State Forestry Administration, 18, Hepingli East Street,  
Beijing 100714 (tel.: +86 10 842 39104 fax: +86 10 842 38883  
e-mail: webmaster@cnpvp.net)

LI Yanmei (Mrs.), Project Administrator, Department for International Cooperation,  
State Intellectual Property Office (SIPO), P.O. Box 8020, 6, Xitucheng Road,  
Haidian District, Beijing 100088 (tel.: +86 10 6209 3288 fax: +86 10 6201 9615  
e-mail: liyanmei@sipo.gov.cn)

ZHENG Yongqi, Professor, Chinese Academy of Forestry, 10091 Beijing  
(tel.: +86 10 6288565 fax: +86 10 62872015 e-mail: zhengyq@caf.ac.cn)

COLOMBIE / COLOMBIA / KOLUMBIEN

Alvaro ABISAMBRA, Gerente General, Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario (ICA),  
Ministerio de Agricultura, Calle 37, No. 8-43, pisos 4 y 5 Aereo 7984, 1511123 El Dorado,  
Bogotá D.F (tel.: +57 1 2884438 fax: +57 1 288 4169 e-mail: gerencia@ica.gov.co)

Ana Luisa DÍAZ JIMÉNEZ (Sra.), Coordinador Nacional, Derechos de Obtentor de  
Variedades y Producción de Semillas, Instituto Colombiano Agropecuario (ICA), Calle 37,  
# 8-43, Piso 4, Bogotá D.F. (tel.: +57 1 232 8643 fax: +57 1 232 4697  
e-mail: semillas@ica.gov.co, semillasica@hotmail.com)

Rocio SAÑUDO DE ANGEL (Sra.), Jefe, Oficina Jurídica, Instituto Colombiano  
Agropecuario (ICA), Calle 37, # 8-43, Piso 5, Bogotá D.F. (tel.: +57 1 232 4690  
fax: +57 1 288 4037 e-mail: juridica@ica.gov.co)

Luis G. GUZMAN VALENCIA, Ministro Consejero, Misión Permanente, 17-19, chemin du  
Champ-d'Anier, 1209 Ginebra, Suiza

CROATIE / CROATIA / KROATIEN / CROACIA

Ruzica ORE (Mrs.), Head of Plant Variety Protection and Registration, Institute for Seeds  
and Seedlings, Vinkovacka cesta 63c, 31000 Osijek (tel.: +385 31 275206  
fax: +385 31 275193 e-mail: r.ore@zsr.hr)

DANEMARK / DENMARK / DÄNEMARK / DINAMARCA

Merete BUUS (Mrs.), Head of Division, The Danish Plant Directorate, Ministry of Food,  
Agriculture and Fisheries, Skovbrynet 20, 2800 Lyngby (tel.: +45 45 263720  
fax: +45 45 26317 e-mail: meb@pdir.dk)

ESPAGNE / SPAIN / SPANIEN / ESPAÑA

Ricardo LÓPEZ DE HARO WOOD, Director, Oficina Española de Variedades Vegetales  
(OEVV), Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación (MAPA), Avda. de Ciudad de  
Barcelona 6, 28007 Madrid (tel.: +34 91 347 6939 fax: +34 91 347 6703  
e-mail: lopezdeharo@mapya.es)

Luis SALAICES, Jefe de Área del Registro de Variedades, Oficina Española de Variedades  
Vegetales (OEVV), Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y Alimentación (MAPA), Avda. de  
Ciudad de Barcelona 6, 28007 Madrid (tel.: +34 91 3476712 fax: +34 91 3476703  
e-mail: lsalaice@mapya.es)

ESTONIE / ESTONIA / ESTLAND

Maria ABAKUMOVA (Ms.), Chief Inspector, Variety Control Department, Estonian Plant  
Production Inspectorate, 71024 Viljandi (tel.: +372 43 346 50 fax: +372 43 346 50  
e-mail: maria.abakumova@plant.agri.ee)

ÉTATS-UNIS D'AMÉRIQUE / UNITED STATES OF AMERICA /  
VEREINIGTE STAATEN VON AMERIKA / ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA

Karen M. HAUDA (Mrs.), Patent Attorney, Office of International Affairs, United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), Washington, D.C. 20231  
(tel.: +1 703 305 9300 ext. 129 fax: +1 703 305 8885 e-mail: karen.hauda@uspto.gov)

Dominic KEATING, Intellectual Property Attaché, Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), Permanent Mission, 11, route de Pregny, 1292 Chambésy, Switzerland (tel.: +41 22 749 52 81 fax: +41 22 749 4880 e-mail: dkeating@ustr.gov)

FÉDÉRATION DE RUSSIE / RUSSIAN FEDERATION / RUSSISCHE FÖDERATION /  
FEDERACIÓN DE RUSIA

Yuri A. ROGOVSKIY, Deputy Chairman, Chief of Methods Department, State Commission of the Russian Federation for Selection Achievements Test and Protection, Orlikov per., 1/11, Moscow 107139 (tel.: +70 095 208 6775 fax: +70 095 207 8626  
e-mail: statecommission@mtu-net.ru)

Madina OUMAROVA (Mrs.), Expert of Methods Department, State Commission of the Russian Federation for Selection Achievements Test and Protection, Orlicov per., 1/11, Moscow 107139 (tel.: +70 095 208 6775 fax: +70 095 207 8626 e-mail: desel@agro.aris.ru)

Evgueny ZAGAYNOV, Counsellor, Permanent Mission, 15, avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, (tel.: +41 22 733 1870 fax: +41 22 734 4044)

Maxim MUSIKHIN, Third Secretary, Permanent Mission, 15, avenue de la Paix, 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland, (tel.: +41 22 733 1870 fax: +41 22 734 4044  
e-mail: maxim.musikhin@ties.itu.int)

FINLANDE / FINLAND / FINNLAND / FINLANDIA

Arto VUORI, Director, Plant Variety Rights Office, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Hallituskatu 3 A, P.O. Box 30, 00023 Government (tel.: +358 9 160 3316  
fax: +358 9 160 52203 e-mail: arto.vuori@mmm.fi)

FRANCE / FRANKREICH / FRANCIA

Nicole BUSTIN (Mlle), Secrétaire général, Comité de la protection des obtentions végétales (CPOV), Ministère de l'agriculture et de la pêche, 11, rue Jean Nicot, 75007 Paris (tel.: +33 1 4275 9314 fax: +33 1 4275 9425 e-mail: nicole.bustin@geves.fr)

HONGRIE / HUNGARY / UNGARN / HUNGRÍA

Karoly NESZMÉLYI, General Director, National Institute for Agricultural Quality Control (NIAQC), Keleti Karoly u. 24, P.O. Box 30, 93, 1024 Budapest (tel.: +36 1 212 4711 fax: +36 1 438 0698 e-mail: neszmelyik@ommi.hu)

Marta POSTEINER-TOLDI (Mrs.), Vice-President, Hungarian Patent Office, Garibaldi u.2, P.O. Box 552, 1054 Budapest (tel.: +36 1 331 2164 fax: +36 1 474 5975 e-mail: vekas@hpo.hu)

Anna LÖRINCZ-FEJES (Mrs.), Deputy Head, Legal and International Department, Hungarian Patent Office, Garibaldi u.2, P.O. Box 552, 1370 Budapest (tel.: +36 1 474 58 98 fax: +36 1 474 58 99 e-mail: lorincza@hpo.hu)

IRLANDE / IRELAND / IRLAND / IRLANDA

John V. CARVILL, Controller of Plant Breeders' Rights, Plant Variety Rights Office, Department of Agriculture and Food, National Crop Variety Testing Centre, Backweston, Leixlip, Co. Kildare (tel.: +353 1 630 2902 fax: +353 1 628 0634 e-mail: john.carvill@agriculture.gov.ie)

ISRAËL / ISRAEL

Shalom BERLAND, Legal Advisor of Ministry of Agriculture and Plant Breeders' Registrar, Plant Breeders' Rights Council, Volcani Centre, P.O. Box 30, Bet-Dagan (tel.: +972 3 948 5566 fax: +972 3 948 5836 )

ITALIE / ITALY / ITALIEN / ITALIA

Bernardo PALESTINI, Dirigente, Direzione Generale della Qualità dei Prodotti Agroalimentari e dei Servizi, Ministero delle Politiche Agricole e Forestali (MPAF), Via XX Settembre 20, 00187 Roma (tel.: +39 06 46656724 fax: +39 06 483998)

Pasquale IANNANTUONO, Conseiller juridique, Office du délégué des accords de propriété intellectuelle, Ministère des affaires étrangères, Palazzo Farnesina, 00100 Rome (tel.: +39 06 3876 2907 fax: +39 06 3691 2277 e-mail: pasquale.iannantuono@libero.it)

Fabrizio GRASSI, Istituto Sperimentale Frutticoltura, Ministero delle Politiche Agricole e Forestali, Via di Fioranello 52, 00134 Roma (tel.: +39 06 9348194 fax: +39 06 79341630 e-mail: f.grassi@mclink.it)

Mario MARINO, Ufficio Biodiversità e Tecnologie Innovative, Direzione Generale per la Qualità dei Prodotti Agroalimentari e la Tutela del Consumatore, Ministero delle Politiche Agricole e Forestali, Via XX Settembre 20, 00186 Roma (tel.: +39 06 46654035 fax: +39 06 4814326 e-mail: biodiversita@politicheagricole.it)

JAPON / JAPAN / JAPÓN

Keiji MARUYAMA, Director, Plant Variety Protection Office, Seeds and Seedlings Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), 1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, 100-8950 Tokyo (tel.: +81 3 3581 0518 fax: +81 3 3502 6572  
e-mail: keiji\_maruyama@nm.maff.go.jp)

Jun KOIDE, Deputy Director, International Affairs, Seeds and Seedlings Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), 1-2-1 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, 100-8950 Tokyo (tel.: +81 3 3591 0524 fax: +81 3 3502 6572  
e-mail: jun\_koide@nm.maff.go.jp)

KENYA / KENIA

Evans O. SIKINYI, Manager, Plant Variety Rights Office, Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), P.O. Box 49592, Waiyaki Way, Nairobi (tel.: +254 2 4440087  
fax: +254 2 4448940 e-mail: pvpo@kephis.org)

LETTONIE / LATVIA / LETTLAND / LETONIA

Iveta OZOLINA (Ms.), Senior Officer, Plant Production Division, Ministry of Agriculture, 2 Republikas laukums, 1981 Riga (tel.: +371 7027258 fax: +371 7027514  
e-mail: iveta.ozolina@zm.gov.lv)

MEXIQUE / MEXICO / MEXIKO / MÉXICO

Enriqueta MOLINA MACÍAS (Sra.), Encargada del Despacho de la Dirección, Servicio Nacional de Inspección y Certificación de Semillas (SNICS), Secretaría de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación (SAGARPA), Av. Presidente Juárez 13, Col. El Cortijo, 54000 Tlalnepantla (tel.: +52 55 5384 2213 fax: +52 55 5390 1441  
e-mail: enriqueta.molina@webtelmex.net.mx)

Karla T. ORNELAS LOERA (Sra.), Tercera Secretaria, Misión Permanente, 16, avenue de Budé, 1202 Ginebra, Suiza (tel.: +41 22 748 0707 fax: +41 22 748 0708  
e-mail: mission.mexico@ties.itu.int)



NORVÈGE / NORWAY / NORWEGEN / NORUEGA

Kåre SELVIK, Director General, Head of Plant Variety Board, Royal Ministry of Agriculture, Akersgt. 059, P.O. Box 8007 Dep., 0030 Oslo (tel.: +47 2 224 9253 fax: +47 2 224 2753 e-mail: kare.selvik@ld.dep.no)

Haakon SØNJU, Registrar, Plant Variety Board, P.O. Box 3, 1431 Aas (tel.: +47 64 944400 fax: +47 64 944410 e-mail: haakon.sonju@slt.dep.no)

Veslemoy-Susanne GUNDERSEN (Ms.), Legal Advisor, Royal Ministry of Agriculture, Akersgt. 059, P.O. Box 8007 Dep, 0030 Oslo (tel.: +47 2 2249277 e-mail: veslemoy-susanne.gundersen@ld.dep.no)

NOUVELLE-ZÉLANDE / NEW ZEALAND / NEUSEELAND / NUEVA ZELANDIA

Chris BARNABY, Examiner of Fruit and Ornamental Varieties, Plant Variety Rights Office (PVRO), P.O. Box 130, Lincoln, Canterbury (tel.: +64 3 325 6355 fax: +64 3 983 3946 e-mail: chris.barnaby@pvr.govt.nz)

PAYS-BAS / NETHERLANDS / NIEDERLANDE / PAÍSES BAJOS

Chris M.M. VAN WINDEN, Manager Propagating Material, Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, Postbus 20401, 2500 EK The Hague (tel.: +31 70 3784281 fax: +31 70 3786156 e-mail: c.m.m.van.winden@dl.agro.nl)

POLOGNE / POLAND / POLEN / POLONIA

Edward S. GACEK, Director General, Research Centre for Cultivar Testing (COBORU), 63-022 Slupia Wielka (tel.: +48 61 2852341 fax: +48 61 2853558 e-mail: e.gacek\_coboru@bptnet.pl)

Julia BORYS (Ms.), Head, DUS Testing Department, Research Centre for Cultivar Testing (COBORU), 63-022 Slupia Wielka (tel.: +48 61 285 23 41 fax: +48 61 285 35 58 e-mail: coboru@bptnet.pl)

Wieslaw PILARCZYK, Expert Statistician, Research Centre for Cultivar Testing (COBORU), 63-022 Slupia Wielka (tel.: +48 61 285 2341 Ext. 224 fax: +48 61 285 35 58 e-mail: wpilar@owl.au.poznan.pl)

RÉPUBLIQUE DE CORÉE / REPUBLIC OF KOREA / REPUBLIK KOREA /  
REPÚBLICA DE COREA

LEE Byung-Mook, Director, Plant Variety Protection Division, National Seed Management Office (NSMO), 433, Anyang 6-dong, Anyang City, Kyunggi-do 430-016  
(tel.: +82 31 467 0150 fax: +82 31 467 0161 e-mail: byungm@seed.go.kr)

CHOI Keun-Jin, Examination Officer/Senior Researcher, Plant Variety Protection Division, National Seed Management Office (NSMO), 433 Anyang 6-dong, Anyang-si, Anyang City, Kyunggi-do 430-016 (tel.: +82 31 4670190 fax: +82 31 4670161 e-mail: kjchoi@seed.go.kr)

YOO Byung Rin, Counsellor, Permanent Mission, 1, avenue de l'Ariana, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland (tel.: +41 22 748 0000 fax: +41 22 748 0003  
e-mail: byungrinyoo@hotmail.com)

RÉPUBLIQUE DE MOLDOVA / REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA / REPUBLIK MOLDAU /  
REPÚBLICA DE MOLDOVA

Dumitru BRINZILA, President, State Commission for Crops Variety Testing and Registration, Ministry of Agriculture, Bd. Stefan cel Mare 162, C.P. 1873, 2004 Chisinau (tel.: +373 2 246222 fax: +373 2 246921 e-mail: brinzila@csip.moldova.md)

Ion PARASCHIV, Chief, State Seed Inspection, Bd. Stefan cel Mare, 162, 1508 Chisinau (tel.: +373 2 210267 fax: +373 2 210267)

RÉPUBLIQUE TCHÈQUE / CZECH REPUBLIC / TSCHECHISCHE REPUBLIK /  
REPÚBLICA CHECA

Jirí SOUCEK, Head of Department, Department of Plant Variety Rights and DUS Tests, Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture (ÚKZÚZ), Za opravnou 4, 150 06 Praha 5 - Motol (tel.: +420 257 211 755 fax: +420 257 211 752  
e-mail: jiri.soucek@ukzuz.cz)

Daniel JUREČKA, Director, Plant Variety Division, Central Institute for Supervising and Testing in Agriculture (ÚKZÚZ), Hroznová 2, Brno 656 06 (tel.: +420 5 43217646 fax: +420 5 43212440 e-mail: daniel.jurecka@ukzuz.cz)

ROUMANIE / ROMANIA / RUMÄNIEN / RUMANIA

Adriana PARASCHIV (Mrs.), Head, State Office for Inventions and Trademarks (OSIM),  
5, Jon Ghica, Sector 3, 70018 Bucharest (tel.: +40 21 3155698 fax: +40 21 3123819  
e-mail: adriana.paraschiv@osim.ro)

Ruxandra URUCU (Ms.), Legal Adviser, Legal and International Affairs Division, State  
Office for Inventions and Trademarks (OSIM), 5, Jon Ghica, Sector 3, 70018 Bucharest  
(tel.: +40 1 3132492 fax: +40 1 3123819 e-mail: ruxandra.urucu@osim.ro)

Mihaela Rodica CIORA (Mrs.), Expert, State Institute for Variety Testing and Registration,  
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, 61, Marasti, Sector 1, 71329 Bucharest  
(tel.: +40 21 223 1425 fax: +40 21 222 5605 e-mail: mihaela\_ciora@gmx.net)

ROYAUME-UNI / UNITED KINGDOM / VEREINIGTES KÖNIGREICH / REINO UNIDO

Heather SACKVILLE HAMILTON (Mrs.), Controller, Head of Seeds Division, Plant Variety  
Rights Office and Seeds Division, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
(DEFRA), White House Lane, Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0LF  
(tel.: +44 1223 342 380 fax: +44 1223 342 386 e-mail: heather.hamilton@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

Michael MILLER, Policy Administrator, Plant Variety Rights Office and Seeds Division,  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), White House Lane,  
Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0LF (tel.: +44 1223 342 375 fax: +44 1223 342 386  
e-mail: michael.miller@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

SLOVAQUIE / SLOVAKIA / SLOWAKEI / ESLOVAQUIA

Katarina BENOVSKÁ (Mrs.), Senior Officer, Plant Breeders' Rights Office, Central Institute  
for Testing in Agriculture (UKSUP), Matuskova 21, 833 16 Bratislava (tel.: +421 2 54654282  
fax: +421 2 54654282 e-mail: odrody@uksup.sk)

SUÈDE / SWEDEN / SCHWEDEN / SUECIA

Karl Olov ÖSTER, Director-General, National Board of Fisheries, President, National Plant  
Variety Board, Ekelundsgatan 1, P.O. Box 423, 401 26 Göteborg (tel.: +46 31 743 03 01  
fax: +46 31 743 04 44 e-mail: karl.olv.oster@fiskeriverket.se)

Christina TÖRNSTRAND (Ms.), Senior Administrative Officer, Ministry of Agriculture,  
10333 Stockholm (tel.: +46 8 4051107 e-mail: christina.tornstrand@agriculture.ministry.se)

SUISSE / SWITZERLAND / SCHWEIZ / SUIZA

Pierre Alex MIAUTON, Station fédérale de recherches en production végétale de Changins,  
Case postale 254, 1260 Nyon 1 (tel.: +41 22 3634668 fax: +41 22 3615469  
e-mail: pierre.miauton@rac.admin.ch)

Manuela BRAND (Frau), Koordinatorin, Büro für Sortenschutz, Bundesamt für  
Landwirtschaft, Mattenhofstrasse 5, 3003 Bern (tel.: +41 31 3222524 fax: +41 31 3222634  
e-mail: manuela.brand@blw.admin.ch)

Eva TSCHARLAND (Frau), Wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin, Bundesamt für Landwirtschaft,  
Mattenhofstrasse 5, 3003 Bern (tel.: +41 31 322 2524 fax: +41 31 323 5455  
e-mail: Eva.tscharland@blw.admin.ch)

UKRAINE / UCRANIA

Valentyna ZAVALEVSKA (Mrs.), First Deputy Chairman, State Service on Right Protection  
for Plant Varieties, 15, Henerala Rodimtseva vul., 03041 Kyiv (tel.: +380 44 2579933  
fax: +380 44 2579934 e-mail: vartest@iptelecom.net.ua)

Oksana ZHMURKO (Mrs.), Head, International Relations Department, State Service on Right  
Protection for Plant Varieties, 15, Henerala Rodimtseva vul., 03041 Kyiv  
(tel.: +380 44 257 9938 fax: +380 44 257 9934 e-mail: zhmurko@sops.gov.ua)

URUGUAY

Carlos GÓMEZ-ETCHEBARNE, Director del Registro de Propiedad de Cultivares y del  
Registro Nacional de Cultivares, Instituto Nacional de Semillas (INASE),  
Casilla Correo 7731 - Pando, 90 000 Canelones (tel.: +598 2 2887099  
fax: +598 2 2887077 e-mail: inasecge@adinet.com.uy)

II. BUREAU / OFFICER / VORSITZ / OFICINA

Karl Olov ÖSTER, President of the Council

III. BUREAU DE L'OMPI / OFFICE OF WIPO / BÜRO DER WIPO /  
OFICINA DE LA OMPI

Karen LEE RATA (Mrs.), Senior Counsellor, Office of the Special Counsel

IV. BUREAU DE L'UPOV / OFFICE OF UPOV /

BÜRO DER UPOV / OFICINA DE LA UPOV

Rolf JÖRDENS, Vice Secretary-General  
Peter BUTTON, Technical Director  
Raimundo LAVIGNOLLE, Senior Counsellor  
Makoto TABATA, Senior Counsellor  
Yolanda HUERTA (Mrs.), Senior Legal Officer  
Paul Therence SENGHOR, Senior Program Officer  
Vladimir DERBENSKIY, Consultant

[L'annexe II suit/  
Annex II follows/  
Anlage II folgt/  
Sigue el Anexo II]

ANNEX II



INTERNATIONALER  
VERBAND  
ZUM SCHUTZ VON  
PFLANZENZÜCHTUNGEN  
GENF, SCHWEIZ

UNION INTERNATIONALE  
POUR LA PROTECTION  
DES OBTENTIONS  
VÉGÉTALES  
GENÈVE, SUISSE

UNIÓN INTERNACIONAL  
PARA LA PROTECCIÓN  
DE LAS OBTENCIONES  
VEGETALES  
GINEBRA, SUIZA

INTERNATIONAL UNION  
FOR THE PROTECTION  
OF NEW VARIETIES  
OF PLANTS  
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

POSITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION  
FOR THE PROTECTION OF NEW VARIETIES OF PLANTS (UPOV)  
CONCERNING DECISION VI/5 OF THE CONFERENCE  
OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION  
ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)

*communicated to the Secretariat of the CBD*

as adopted by the Council

on April 11, 2003

### Background

*This document supersedes the memorandum prepared by the Office of the Union on the genetic use restriction technologies (GURTs) and sent to the CBD, dated January 10, 2003.*

*In its decision VI/5, adopted at its sixth session held in The Hague in April 2002, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD invited UPOV to examine, in the context of its work, the specific intellectual property implications of GURTs, particularly in respect of indigenous and local communities, and to further study their potential impacts on small farmers, indigenous and local communities and on farmers' rights. UPOV was also invited to study the applicability of existing, or the need to develop new, legal mechanisms to address the application of GURTs.*

*UPOV has not to-date, in the context of its work or otherwise, examined substantively the intellectual property implications of GURTs, as identified in the decision above. However, UPOV would like to take the opportunity of this invitation to comment on the need for breeders to have a system of protection to be able to recover their investment and to receive incentives in order to be able to continue their breeding activities. In this respect, UPOV notes that the UPOV Convention provides an effective and well balanced system for the protection of new plant varieties which assures the breeders interest. Where effective systems of protection are in place, breeders may not have to rely on other systems of protection.*

*With respect to varieties containing GURTs, it should be noted that such varieties may be granted plant breeders' rights if they satisfy the conditions.*

### Summary

*Breeders need to recover their investment and to receive incentives in order to be able to continue their breeding activities. The introduction of a legal framework according to the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV Convention) is a suitable approach to encourage the breeding of new varieties of plants for the benefit of society. In this respect, UPOV notes that the UPOV Convention provides an effective and well balanced system for the protection of new plant varieties which assures the breeders interest. Where effective systems of protection are in place, breeders may not have to rely on other systems of protection.*

## Introduction

1. The following sections highlight the key features of the UPOV Convention, and which UPOV considers appropriate to provide an effective and well-balanced system for the protection of new varieties of plants. All references to the UPOV Convention in this document refer to the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention.

2. The development of improved varieties demands a considerable investment in terms of human and financial resources. Sustainable breeding programs require a return of the investment through the commercialization of the resulting varieties. Protection of intellectual property rights on new plant varieties according to the UPOV Convention facilitates such a return by providing a legal basis to prevent, under well-defined conditions, unauthorized exploitation of plant varieties by others.

3. The UPOV Convention provides a legal basis for the protection of new plant varieties. The UPOV Convention is a *sui generis* system for plant variety protection tailored for this purpose, reflecting the specific features of the subject of protection, which is a new plant variety, and the circumstances under which this plant variety is used. The scope of protection under the UPOV Convention has been carefully defined to provide an incentive for breeders to develop new varieties of plants beneficial for both farmers and consumers. A key feature of the UPOV system is that protected varieties, as a most important plant genetic resource, may be freely used by the worldwide community of breeders for further breeding. The UPOV Convention, furthermore, provides for an option for saving of seed by farmers in some situations. The protection given under the UPOV Convention can be analyzed under the following parameters:

- subject of the protection/extension of the protection,
- acts covered by the protection (1991 Act),
- materials covered by the protection,
- duration of the protection,
- exceptions,
- restriction to protection/compulsory licensing.

## Subject of the Protection/Extension of the Protection

4. Under the UPOV Convention, a protection title can only be granted to a plant variety, which is defined by the expression of the characteristics resulting from a given genotype or combination of genotypes, distinguished from any other plant grouping by the expression of at least one of the said characteristics and considered as a unit with regard to its suitability for being propagated unchanged and which satisfies the criteria established in the UPOV Convention. The protection granted to a variety does not extend to other varieties, except in the case of:



- (i) varieties, which are essentially derived from the initial protected variety, where the protected variety is not itself an essentially derived variety;
- (ii) varieties which are not clearly distinguished from the protected variety; and
- (iii) varieties whose production requires the repeated use of the protected variety.

#### Acts Covered by the Protection (1991 Act)

5. The nature of the right granted by the UPOV Convention is that the following acts with respect to the propagating material of the protected variety require the authorization of the breeder:

- (i) production or reproduction (multiplication),
- (ii) conditioning for the purpose of propagation,
- (iii) offering for sale,
- (iv) selling or other marketing,
- (v) exporting,
- (vi) importing,
- (vii) stocking for any of the purposes mentioned in (i) to (vi) above.

6. Furthermore, subject to the exceptions to, and exhaustion of, the breeder's right, the acts referred to in respect of harvested material, including entire plants and parts of plants, obtained through the unauthorized use of propagating material of the protected variety shall require the authorization of the breeder, unless the breeder has had reasonable opportunity to exercise his right in relation to the said propagating material.

7. In addition, each Contracting Party may provide that, subject to the exceptions to, and exhaustion of, the breeder's right, the acts referred to in respect of products made directly from harvested material of the protected variety falling within the provisions for harvested material mentioned above through the unauthorized use of the said harvested material shall require the authorization of the breeder, unless the breeder has had reasonable opportunity to exercise his right in relation to the said harvested material.

#### Materials Covered by the Protection

8. As stated in paragraph 5 above, plant variety protection according to the UPOV Convention covers the propagating material of the protected varieties, such as seeds, bulbs, tubers, seedlings, etc.

#### Duration of the Protection

9. Under the UPOV Convention (1991 Act), the breeder's right is granted for a fixed period, which shall not be shorter than 20 years from the date of the grant of the breeder's right. For trees and vines, the said period shall not be shorter than 25 years from the said date.

### Exceptions

10. Under the UPOV Convention, the breeder's right shall not extend to:
- (i) acts done privately and for non-commercial purposes,
  - (ii) acts done for experimental purposes, and
  - (iii) acts done for the purpose of breeding other varieties.

The exclusion of acts done privately and for non-commercial purposes is of particular relevance for subsistence farmers who use plant varieties for their own food production. The research exemption and the breeders' exemption, as mentioned in (ii) and (iii) above, are important features of the UPOV Convention, which provide for the established practice amongst breeders whereby varieties produced by other breeders may be used for breeding new varieties.

11. Under the UPOV Convention, each member may, within reasonable limits and subject to the safeguarding of the legitimate interests of the breeder, restrict the breeder's right in relation to any protected variety in order to permit farmers to use, for propagating purposes, on their own holdings, the product of the harvest, which they have obtained by planting on their own holdings. This provision enables each member of UPOV to decide, according to its own national circumstances, on whether or not, and to what extent, to recognize the practice of farmers to use a part of the harvest derived from the protected variety for the next year's planting, known as "farmers' privilege."

### Restriction to Protection/Compulsory Licensing

12. The UPOV Convention provides that a member may restrict the free exercise of a breeder's right for public interest. This provision allows a Government, for example in the case of an unforeseeable disaster in a country, to take measures to provide farmers with such planting material, as is necessary to reestablish the agricultural production, by limiting the exercise of the breeder's right.

[End of Annex II and of document]