From optimism in Oman to regrets in Rome:
the International Seed Treaty fails to deliver

On World Food Sovereignty Day (16 October) we should recognise that the very basis of our food system – the biodiversity that feeds us – is under increasing threat. One week ago, the sixth meeting of the Governing Body of the International Seed Treaty (IT PGRFA / GB6) ended in disappointment all around that the Treaty is not doing what it should to defend the diversity of the plants that underpin food sovereignty. At the previous Governing Body in Oman (GB5) we believed the Treaty had turned a corner when Governments Renewed Commitment to Implement Farmers’ Rights [www.ukabc.org/gb5.htm](http://www.ukabc.org/gb5.htm) (also see attached).

After the Governing Body in Rome (GB6) Via Campesina regrets that after 30 years of international discussions, Farmers’ Rights are still not implemented and called on the Treaty to stop collaborating with the DivSeek initiative that would digitise, dematerialise and destroy the precious diversity of peasant seeds that feed the world. Civil Society, led by Via Campesina, had forewarned that there were dangers that governments were “Destroying the Treaty”.

Governments are also deeply concerned. Liz Matos, the representative of Angola and a key negotiator in the Treaty’s deliberations on behalf of her country and the African region since the inception of negotiations in FAO on the Treaty, also expressed her disappointment that the Treaty is NOT doing what it should. Her final comments to the Governing Body are pasted below and an audio of the tribute and her response can be found here [www.ukabc.org/LizMatosTribute&Reply.mp3](http://www.ukabc.org/LizMatosTribute&Reply.mp3).

As summarised in the ENB Bulletin report of GB6, Civil Society made important observations on the challenges for the Treaty.

**ENB summarised:** "[In the opening session, on behalf of CSOs] La Via Campesina expressed concern about the slow progress in benefit-sharing, noting that farmers feel excluded from research and initiatives to enhance the MLS. The ETC Group said GB 6 must resolve a crisis that involves parties that do not yet share their PGRFA, users that do not share benefits, and industry that shares neither PGRFA nor benefits."

"[At the end of the Governing Body meeting, on behalf of CSOs] La Via Campesina regretted that after 30 years of international discussions, Farmers’ Rights are still not implemented, and requested that the Treaty stop collaborating with the DivSeek initiative, noting that genome sequencing facilitates biopiracy. Civil society recommended that the GB switch to a CFS model of civil society engagement, and requested that it investigate possible contradictions between WIPO, UPOV and the Treaty."
The final statements by Civil Society are pasted below.

An introduction to the Treaty can be found here. All contributions by CSOs can be found here. The daily reports by Earth Negotiations Bulletin are here. Treaty website for GB6 can be found here.

If you would like more information on the International Seed Treaty or the outcome of the deliberations, please ask.

Patrick