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M.S. SWAMINATHAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION

Chennai International Conference on Biodiversity in Relation to Food and Human Security in a Warming Planet on the occasion of the Year of Biodiversity

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Introduction

Estimates indicate that agriculture has to increase its production by at least 70% to provide food to a population that is expected to reach 9 billion people in 2050, and it has to do this in a more sustainable manner - less water, less fertilisers, less agrochemicals and without expanding the involved land. Concerns exist also about the ability to increase or even sustain crop yield in the face of dynamic environmental and biotic threats.

To exchange ideas on these issues and to develop a road map for ensuring biodiversity continues to remain an important tool in achieving the goal of hunger free world, an International conference on "Bioversity in relation to food & human security in a warming planet" took place on February 15-17, 2010, in Chennai, India, organised by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in collaboration with FAO, IFAD, Bioversity International, CBD, DBT, ICAR, ICRISAT, IFPRI, IRRI, WFP, IUCN, UNEP, SDC, ICRAF, Global Biodiversity Trust, GEF, PPVFRA, NBA.

The meeting was attended by 110 participants from 23 countries and included sessions on biodiversity's relationship with sustainable livelihoods, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), agriculture and climate change. At the conclusion of the event, participants adopted the Chennai Declaration, which highlights the importance of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), the role of women and farmers in the sustainable management of biodiversity, and biodiversity conservation.

The Declaration includes a nine-step plan of action for achieving the goals of biodiversity conservation and use in an era of climate change, including: deliver as one by recognizing in national development plans the importance of the use and conservation of biodiversity in agro-ecosystems, which necessitates integration of approaches across government departments confronting rural development, food

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security, poverty reduction, environment and climate change; strengthen the role of farming and tribal communities by establishing special gene banks for climate-resilient crops; refocus the research and development priorities to enhance the productivity of bio-diverse agriculture, for example by characterizing, evaluating and utilizing landraces and wild crop relatives in crop improvement programmes to transfer traits relevant to climate change; establish climate-resilient farming systems; adequately recognize the role of farmers and farming in the mitigation of climate change; accord economic value to ecosystem services such as land, water, biodiversity and climate change; and launch a climate care movement at all levels.

A summary of the speech held by the representative of the President of the Italian Academy of Sciences, the Chennai Declaration, the statement presented by G. T. Scarascia Mugnozza, President of the Italian Academy of Sciences, in support of the M. S. Swaminathan candidacy to 2010 Nobel Price for Peace and a short narrative on the G.T. Scarascia Mugnozza Genetic Resources Centre are reported in next pages.