

APBREBES Intervention on Agenda Item 3

Examination of the Conformity of the Plant Breeders' Rights Bill for Zanzibar with UPOV91

Mr. Chairman,

APBREBES is taking the floor on this agenda item to voice the concerns of Tanzanian NGOs including groups such as ActionAid Tanzania, PELUM Tanzania, Swissaid Tanzania, Tanzania Organic Agriculture Movement, Tanzania Alliance for Biodiversity and the East & Southern Africa Farmers Federation (ESAFF) that represent the interests of small-holder farmers in the United Republic of Tanzania.

In a statement issued today these groups have expressed concerns that farmers' organizations and relevant civil society organizations have not been consulted on the Plant Breeders' Rights Bill for Zanzibar, adding [I quote] "the entire process has been non-participatory, shutting out the very farmers that the Bill purportedly benefits" [unquote].

They are particularly concerned of the wide-ranging and far reaching implications of acceding to UPOV 1991 for the farmers of the United Republic of Tanzania, who are largely smallholder farmers managed by women that thus far have contributed greatly to conserving, improving and making available agricultural biodiversity, which is the basis of their food security.

They refer in their statement to the commitments undertaken in the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources on Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) to take measures to realize farmers' rights including the farmers' right to participate in making decisions, at the national level, on matters related to plant genetic resources, stressing that there has been a failure to live up to these international commitments. In addition, we like to emphasize that there is also a responsibility for donors and international organizations and governments engaged in technical assistance. These external actors have a responsibility to avoid external pressure and tight timelines in order to make it possible to have a real participation of all stakeholders.