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Update on ePhyto activities

Agenda item 14

Prepared by the IPPC Secretariat

1. The purpose of this document is to provide the Commission with an update of some of the key successes emanating from the IPPC ePhyto Solution Programme. It is not all inclusive but instead attempts to point out some of the key results of the unique tool developed by the Secretariat for Contracting Parties.

2. As of 31 December 2021, one hundred and four (104) IPPC Contracting Parties have been registered with the IPPC ePhyto Solution and earlier in the year, the ePhyto Solution passed the mark of one million (1,000,000) ePhyto certificates exchanged. Averaging a little more than one hundred thousand certificates being exchanged each month (and built to be able to exchange that number per day), the IPPC ePhyto Solution is a prime example of governments, industry and international organizations working together to build an inexpensive, efficient and money-saving tool to facilitate trade for any IPPC Contracting Party wishing to do so. Beyond that, the development of the IPPC ePhyto Solution can be used as a guide, and even a tool itself, for other international organizations (e.g., OIE, Codex) wishing to avail themselves of the opportunity to have a system to replace paper certificates with digital certificate exchanges.

3. With the onboarding of many registered countries still to take place, a great learning tool for those IPPC Contracting Parties still deciding how best to approach ePhyto is through a review of the detailed country implementation case studies available on the www.ephytoexchange.org webpage. The Secretariat would like to thank the ten countries that have provided their case studies for making them accessible to all those Contracting Parties wishing to learn from others' experiences in implementing the ePhyto Solution. Both developing and developed countries alike have contributed detailed information about the processes they undertook to establish their respective relationships with the IPPC ePhyto Solution. The case studies include contact information for the representatives of the individual countries that provided the information which is another characteristic of the unique and positive nature of the ePhyto Solution. Both GeNS countries and those with national systems alike have had no

reservations in stepping up to assist new arrivals to the ePhyto Solution with their onboarding process. The Secretariat encourages not only Contracting Party NPPOs to review these valuable documents, but also veterinary and food safety organizations who are contemplating electronic certification.

4. Despite the pandemic preventing opportunities to meet face to face, the Secretariat managed to conduct a series of workshops and webinars with representatives of the ePhyto Industry Advisory Group. Regional webinars were held for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Near East and North Africa, and the South African Region in cooperation with the FAO regional offices in Budapest, Cairo and Harare. Individual national events took place with the Republic of Korea, the People's Republic of China, the Dominican Republic, Cote D'Ivoire, Bahamas, and Costa Rica. These events provided an opportunity for all participants, both industry and government, to learn about the IPPC ePhyto Solution from all angles: the IPPC side, the technical side, and the industry side. Additional workshops and webinars are planned or being planned for 2022.

5. The partnership with the Industry Advisory Group is representative of the unique nature of the ePhyto Solution in that both government and industry have a vested interest in the program's success because of the benefits the Solution offers to both. For industry, it lowers the cost of doing trade. Case studies have shown a reduction in demurrage charges, decreased use of express shippers for sending the paper certificate and, ultimately, improving the efficiency and speed of the trading process. The Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation reports that Morocco is saving as much as US\$55 per container as a result of using the IPPC ePhyto Solution. For governments, the ePhyto Solution also increases efficiency at the ports and at the same time reduces the risk of harmful pests by reducing the incidence of fraudulent paper certificates.

6. The success of the ePhyto Solution thus far is in no small part due to the work the Secretariat has been doing with various partners, and especially with the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation. The Alliance is a key partner of the Secretariat in the implementation of the ePhyto Solution in developing and less-developed countries. The Letter of Intent between the Secretariat and the Alliance will further strengthen this relationship which has also facilitated access to funding from Germany's GiZ for a PCE to be take place in Senegal. Alliance projects have been conducted, are being conducted or will soon be conducted in countries as diverse as Morocco, Nigeria, Madagascar, Jordan, Fiji among others. The Alliance is unique in that it brings together a coalition of both government and the private sector to introduce, implement and train in the use of the IPPC ePhyto Solution becoming a virtual extension of the Secretariat and the UNICC. The combination of the Alliance, the IPPC Secretariat ePhyto Team and our IT providers, the United Nations International Computing Centre, has resulted in a unique to the world combination of international organizations, individual governments and the private sector working together seamlessly to provide an enhanced and improved trade environment for both producers and consumers of plants and plant products. The Alliance has been at the forefront in proposing and facilitating enhancements such as eSignature and translation into Arabic of the ePhyto Solution (via Germany's GiZ) as well as making up for the lack of resources available to the IPPC by taking the initiative in partnership with the IPPC to foster ePhyto uptake in several important countries around the world.

7. In 2021, a huge step forward was taken with the translation into French of the web-based Generic ePhyto National System (GeNS). This will be particularly useful in facilitating the onboarding of French-speaking countries in Africa. A number of countries in Africa have previously requested French and this is another instance of the benefit of the Secretariat's partnership with the Global Alliance as they have ePhyto-trained French speakers working on their ePhyto projects in French-speaking Africa. Beyond French, however, the Alliance has facilitated funding from the German aid agency, GiZ, to pay for the translation of the GeNS system into Arabic. This particular effort will also require that the GeNS application be able to work from right to left as opposed to the normal left to right. The expectation is for the work on the Arabic GeNS version to be completed by the end of 2022. While translation into Spanish has not yet been initiated, an overwhelming majority of Latin American countries have already onboarded the system or are in the testing phase. Nevertheless, in the view of the Secretariat, an overall goal is to eventually the ePhyto Solution translated into all of the FAO official languages.

8. Finally, efforts to find a sustainable funding solution other than continued dependence on contributions from contracting parties are finally taking their first steps. Although the Secretariat is deeply disappointed that despite two calls for nominations to the Focus Group on Sustainable Funding yielded no nominations from Africa, the Near East and Latin America, the Bureau recommended going forward nevertheless with the available nominees as the need to establish a mechanism for sustained funding well into the future is extremely necessary as the IPPC ePhyto Solution has become a mission critical component for many Contracting Party NPPOs.

9. The CPM is invited to:

- 1) *note* the results of the 2021 ePhyto Solution work programme,
- 2) *encourage* all Contracting Parties intending to do so to register and onboard to the ePhyto Solution,
- 3) *urge* all Contracting Parties currently doing so to continue to provide support to the IPPC ePhyto Solution through the multidonor trust fund, and,
- 4) *encourage* all Contracting Parties to support the efforts of the Focus Group on Sustainable Funding for ePhyto.