

******* JOINT STATEMENT *******

of the

**Committee of Board Chairs & Center Directors' Committee
14 May 2003**

TO BE PRESENTED TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE CONSULTATIVE
GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH (CGIAR)

I. INTRODUCTION

The Committee of Board Chairs (CBC) and the Center Directors Committee (CDC) met in both separate and joint session in Den Haag on 11-14 May 2003. At these sessions, the CBC and CDC worked constructively on an agenda that will allow the Centers to work together more effectively to achieve the goals of the CGIAR and to make positive contributions to the evolutionary changes to the CG System. The need of the Centers and other components of the CG System to adapt to new circumstances is reflected in the agreed upon actions and recommendations stated below.

II. ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. New Center Alliance

Despite greater competitive pressure within the CG System, the Centers have been working more and more collaboratively with each other. At their joint meeting on May 13-14, 2003, the CBC and CDC agreed to move forward with the establishment of a formal alliance between the Centers to further enhance the level, quality and effectiveness of their collaborative efforts and to streamline the Centers contribution to the reform of the CG System. While the details of how this new Center Alliance will be structure, what it will ultimately be called, and how it will operate are still under development, the CBC and CDC believe the concept of a more formal alliance between the Centers will result in significant, positive, value-added contributions to the CG reform process.

Of particular note is the desire of the Centers to improve and deepen their collaborative relationship with the newly formed System Office, the CG Secretariat, and the Secretariat of the Science Council (once it has been established). To accomplish these objectives, the Centers intend to create an Alliance Office and to appoint an Executive Officer who will serve as the focal point for our strong desire to streamline the management of the support units within the SO that were created by and for the Centers. The Executive Officer will report to the Chair of the CDC and, in addition to managing the Center support units within the SO, the Executive Officer will represent the both CDC and CBC with partners like the CG Secretariat, the SO, SC, ExCo, and others. Our intention is for the Alliance Office and its Executive Officer to pursue our objectives in close cooperation with the SO.

B. Codes of Conduct

Further evidence of the strong desire of the CDC and CBC to enhance collaboration between the Centers is the establishment of Codes of Conduct to guide our interactions. The CDC has agreed upon a Code of Conduct for itself and for the Challenge Programs. The CBC strongly endorses the CDC's efforts on this and together we intend to further develop and unify these codes of conduct, to make them applicable at all levels of our organizations. To do so will require approval by the Center Boards, but we feel this will greatly enhance our ability to broaden and deepen our collaborative efforts, and to provide a means to hold ourselves accountable to each other.

C. The Science Council (SC)

The CBC and CDC believe a strong and independent Science Council is essential to the overall performance and credibility of the CG System. We understand that the SC Search Committee that ExCo established will report that it does not believe it has a suitable pool of candidates from which to draw upon in selecting the members of the SC, request ExCo grant it a three-month delay in their deadline, and approve a more proactive approach to establishing a pool of qualified candidates. The CBC and CDC agree it is better to take longer to select the right candidates than to hurry the selection process along. At the same time, we believe there is a significant vacuum that has been created in the CG System due to the absence of a fully functioning SC. This vacuum has led to the SC role being usurped or filled in inappropriate and ineffectual ways (e.g., current review procedures, the lack of clear priorities for Challenge Programs, etc.).

The CBC believes it can collectively make a significant, value-added contribution to a more proactive approach and encourages other stakeholders to do so as well. The CBC intends to review and, where necessary, suggest refinements to the selection process and criteria and to submit a list of candidates that the CBC believes meet the selection criteria – including a range of candidates who are new to the CG System and people who have significant level and breadth of experience with the CG System.

D. The Executive Council (ExCo) and its Program Committee

The CBC and CDC greatly value our involvement in ExCo and believe it is making a positive contribution to the reform of the CG System. We remain uncertain about the intended function of the ExCo Program Committee in relation to the Science Council. While we fully support the involvement of a variety of donor and stakeholder perspectives in providing input to the AGM on strategic priorities, relevancy, and applicability of the research that is conducted in the CG System, we believe the Science Council should remain independent. Therefore, we strongly urge the ExCo to clearly separate the roles and functions of its Program Committee from that of the Science Council. Specifically, the Science Council should report directly to the CG Members through the AGM and the ExCo should refrain from having the SC's advice and council be filtered through the ExCo Program Committee.

We also recommend that the ExCo should periodically evaluate whether it is fulfilling its intended mission and function within the CG System, especially with regard to the intention set forth in its Terms of Reference that it should not become a defacto decision-making body for the CG Members, but rather to take its direction from the Members through decisions taken at the AGM.

E. Challenge Programs

The CDC and CBC believe the Challenge Programs have brought about many positive changes to the CG System. At the same time, however, we are deeply concerned that if certain problems with the CPs are not addressed, they will have a significant detrimental effect on the long-term health and viability of the CG System. While CPs are responding to the priorities of national governments and other key funders, we believe the lack of a coherent System-wide programmatic strategy is a major impediment to achieving the mission of the CGIAR.

We stress the urgency of ExCo taking steps to initiate a process that will lead to the establishment of a clear System-wide programmatic strategy. Such a strategy will provide the basis for setting priorities for determining what CPs should be pursued. It will also help to ensure CPs truly are bringing in new sources of funding rather than resulting primarily in the reprogramming of traditional funding sources. The new approaches to governance that are being utilized in the CPs to-date have allowed us to forge new partnerships and positive working relationships. At the same time, care must be taken to ensure that the transaction costs associated with new models of governance do not escalate. Finally, if funding for CPs comes at the expense of the core funding for the Centers, we are deeply concerned about the consequences for the long-term financial health and well being of the CG System. In this regard, the CBC strongly endorses the Financial Criteria for Challenge Programs that the CDC has already submitted to ExCo.

F. The Annual General Meeting

While the CBC and CDC support the elimination of the Mid-Term Meeting and the move to conduct the Annual General Meetings (AGMs) in developing countries, we see ample opportunity for improving the AGM. We recommend that there should be a clearer separation between those portions of the AGM that are devoted to diplomatic objectives, substantive/scientific objectives, and CG System business objectives. In addition, there should be a minimum of two days devoted to CG System business objectives at the AGM. With regard to the location of the AGM, we believe there are significant benefits to conducting the AGM in developing countries as well as in Washington D.C. Accordingly, we recommend that it be held in Washington D.C. every other year, starting with the 2004 AGM, and in alternating years that it be held in other locations in both developing and developed countries. This recommendation should be considered in conjunction with the recommendation for a new type of forum outlined below.

G. Increased Dialogue and Exchange of Knowledge on Agricultural Research and Development

The elimination of the MTM and the new approach to the AGM have highlighted the need for more frequent and substantively-oriented dialogue and exchange between the Centers, the donors, our partners, and the users and stakeholders who are affected by or rely upon our research. The CBC and CDC intend to explore the possibility of periodically conducting a conference or some other type of event that will be designed to increase the dialogue and exchange of information and knowledge on agricultural research and development. The event will be to provide a regular opportunity for the Centers to interact with donors, our partners, and the users and stakeholders who are affected by and rely upon our research on matters on issues of substantive and strategic importance. The precise substantive focus of each event would differ and could be driven by the most interesting or promising research emerging from the Centers and the needs of our donors, users, partners and stakeholders. When the Science Council is established, the CBC and CDC would welcome its involvement, along with the donors, our partners, and other stakeholders in helping to shape the agenda. We intend for this event to take place in a developing country. We also intend for it to be held early in the year on a regular, planned basis so as to avoid any conflicts with the AGM. We seek input on the frequency that such an event should be conducted, but we intend to actively begin to initiate the planning for the first conference in early 2005.

H. Review Processes

1) External Programme & Management Reviews (EPMR)

The CBC and CDC believe that separate management and programme reviews do not work and we find them to be unacceptable. The linkages between science and its management and delivery (the management of science to produce impacts) are totally missing with such an approach. The experience with a split review of the ICRISAT is a case in point. While the External Programme Review (EPR) Panel had a chance to interact with all members of the Governing Board of ICRISAT, this was not the case with the External Management Review (EMR) Panel. Accepted practices and procedures for conducting EPMR reviews appear to have been abandoned. For example, while the iSC was involved in the EPR it was not involved in the EMR. The CG Secretariat managed the EMR process. In general, there was a lack of regard for the time and resources the review process imposes on the Center as a whole. The CBC and CDC recommend the ExCo bring these two review processes back together and rapidly return the control of EPMR review process to the iSC and, once it is been established, the SC.

2) Restructuring Reviews

In reviewing the process and results of the recently completed ISNAR Restructuring Review Team many felt the process used to conduct the review used procedures that are different to those normally applied in the CGIAR and the conclusions of the Review Team went beyond the Terms of Reference, which specifically states that “the option of phasing out ISNAR will not be considered.” For example, ISNAR as an

institution was not invited to make comment on the outcome of the review before it was sent to ExCo, nor has any senior ISNAR official been invited to participate in the ExCo session at which the report of the Review Team will be considered. The CGIAR is in the process of a major strategy and planning exercise, the results of which will almost certainly conclude that an expansion of ISNAR services and activities is needed. The aim must be to keep the ISNAR mandate alive whilst strengthening its presence in Africa with links to ARIs and NARs. Consistent with the Terms of Reference for the review, we believe the ExCo should pursue a course of action that leads to innovative management and governance solutions that maintain the integrity of the ISNAR mission and program. We also urge the Transition Team to ensure that a fair and transparent process is used in restructuring the staff compliment.

I. Strengthening Public Awareness and Resource Mobilization in CGIAR

The CDC and CBC continue to recognize the crucial importance of effective public awareness to bolster the system's efforts to mobilize traditional and nontraditional resources in support of international agricultural research. In recognition of the wide range of perceptions about the role and impact of the Future Harvest Foundation (FHF) in contributing to these important objectives, in early 2003 the CBC and CDC commissioned a review of the Foundation's mission, role and performance. The review was conducted by two experienced consultants, and involved interviews with a total of 51 stakeholders across the CGIAR. The review underscored the critical importance of public awareness at the System level. It recommended that there is a need for a thorough rethinking of the public awareness and resource mobilization functions within the CG system. It requires a redefinition of the highest priorities, aligned with external realities. It proposed that there be a reallocation of responsibilities within the System in the interests of coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency. And it urged that the Group as a whole, and not the CDC alone, to endorse and appropriately finance these functions, if the objectives are to be achieved. Further, the review recommended that a common board of the Foundation and PARC be organized to include individuals that are representative of a much broader range of stakeholders, including donors, partners from the northern and the developing countries members of the Group, the private sector, and experienced communications practitioners.

The CDC and CBC in principle endorse the "4R" option proposed by the Review Team – to Redefine, Reallocate, Relocate, and Resource. Given the divergence of opinions about FHF, the CBC and CDC endorse the need to address the many issues raised about the organization and to forge a consensus on its future mandate, priorities, location, and resourcing. We underscore the importance of having a fully integrated strategy for public awareness and resource mobilization that is supported by the Group, and that it is implemented in a coordinated manner by all key parts of the system. We will therefore be working to have this issue taken up by the Group during AGM03, and look to the Group to provide guidance and endorsement for a truly integrated strategy on public awareness and resource mobilization that can be enthusiastically supported by all.

III. CONCLUSION

We bring these matters to your attention for your information and, where appropriate, action. We hope and trust you will share our concern and our sense of urgency of the need to address these important issues as we pursue our common purpose of achieving the mission and objectives of the CGIAR System.