

IN MEMORIAM

**CGIAR Annual General Meeting
October 29-31, 2003
Nairobi, Kenya**

The Opening Statement

Of

CGIAR Chairman Ian Johnson

is dedicated to the
memory of

**Wilfried P. Thalwitz
(3-1-1932 to 9-3-2003)**

the fifth CGIAR Chairman,
as a tribute to his
life and achievements

2370 words

**“AN EVER EVOLVING CGIAR”
BY IAN JOHNSON, CHAIRMAN, CGIAR**

1. Introduction: Welcome and Thanks

Your Excellency, Vice President
Your Excellency, Minister of Agriculture
Honorable Ministers
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Welcome to all. It is a great pleasure to see old friends of the CGIAR including so many that I visited over this past year to promote the mission of the CGIAR.

I am pleased to declare the 3rd Annual General Meeting of the CGIAR open. This is the first AGM to be held in Africa. It will not be the last.

We are in Nairobi at the invitation of the Government of Kenya. In keeping with the spirit of that invitation, we have received full support and cooperation from the host government. The results of that cooperation are visible all around us. The support we received has enabled us to arrange an innovative AGM which will enliven our proceedings and add depth to them. I thank the Government of Kenya, the Ministry of Agriculture in particular, our colleagues at KARI, the Kenyan volunteers, and all others who helped.

We are honored that the Government of Kenya is represented at such a high level in our opening session. We realize, Mr. Vice President, that the demands on your time are heavy. We particularly appreciate the fact, therefore, that you have found the time to join us, and to share your wisdom and experience with us. I have no doubt that the thoughts you share with us will give AGM03 a great start. We look to you for inspiration, as we confront the many challenges that await us.

Mr. Minister, I thank you for your participation in these proceedings, and for your enthusiastic support throughout the plans and preparations for AGM. Kenya is a respected member of the CGIAR and the only country in the world which has two CGIAR centers. The Kenya-CGIAR partnership is sturdy and productive. I look forward to the further strengthening of that partnership under your guidance.

I thank, as well, UNEP (Mr. Ahmed Djoghlaif), the Directors General and staff of ILRI and the World Agroforestry Centre for their invaluable contribution to the launch of AGM03.

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2. A Celebration of Great Lives

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen. Wilfried Thalwitz, fifth Chairman of the CGIAR, passed away in September. I dedicate this opening statement to his memory, as a tribute to his effective leadership, his compassion for the world's poor, and his outstanding association with development programs in Africa. I have also lost a long-standing mentor and colleague.

Wilfried Thalwitz rose through the ranks of the World Bank to become Senior Vice President and, in retirement, was an adviser to institutions across the globe. Most of you will recall that his tenure at the CGIAR was relatively brief (1990-1991), because the Bank moved him away, to head what was then the newly inaugurated Vice Presidency for Europe and the Soviet Union. Those who knew him as CGIAR Chairman, and remain connected with the CGIAR, hold him in high regard for the extent of his achievements in such a short time. Under Wilfried's guidance, the CGIAR made a decisive change in direction, adopting productivity and natural resources management as twin pillars of research, thus achieving a goal he fervently espoused.

I am pleased to announce that with the support of his wife Margret, family and friends we will nurture his legacy through a **Wilfried Thalwitz Fellowship for Young Scientists**.

We have lost Derek Tribe of Australia, and Walter Rill of Austria. They were both passionately committed to the mission and goals of the CGIAR. Derek Tribe influenced the course of several CGIAR programs, particularly in Africa. Later, in retirement, he devoted his time and efforts to carrying the message of the CGIAR to numerous audiences, in Australia and elsewhere. For many years, and at the time of his death, Walter Rill was Austria's representative to the CGIAR. As an Executive Director at the World Bank, and as Austria's delegate, he was a faithful spokesman for the CGIAR. We benefited from his counsel, and will always value and remember his commitment to the CGIAR.

Today we honor their accomplishments.

3. AGM03: CGIAR and Africa

Let us now move on.

The new Members-Centers Day on Monday provided the setting for the kind of interaction that strengthens mutual understanding and dedication. It is also an important aspect of accountability. Following those exchanges of information, yesterday's field trips gave us a flavor of the research partnership between center scientists and their national colleagues here in Kenya, and provided us with clear and direct evidence of the impact of research. Against that background, it is an auspicious coincidence that we are back in Africa at the 25th anniversary of ICRAF/World Agroforestry Centre. I congratulate the center's management and staff.

AGM03 is characterized by many innovations. In addition to Members-Centers Day and the newly designed field trips, a Ministerial Roundtable, an Innovation Marketplace, and a Dialogue with Young Scientists lie ahead. These changes have been designed to ensure that AGM is rich in substance, and that science remains our focus.

NARS-CGIAR collaboration, the CGIAR System's dialogue with civil society, and many other developments began in Africa. The Genetic Resources Policy Committee was formed here, and during the course of AGM03 we will be renewing the committee's mandate and membership.

The CGIAR is an active investor and partner in Africa's development, and in 2004, we expect to spend 46 percent of the estimated budget of \$408 million in Africa, the highest ever.

4. Multiple Challenges

The results of the partnership between national scientists and their CGIAR counterparts are already evident. Some of the joint activities with the host country are recorded in "Kenya-CGIAR Partnership," a publication that the CGIAR has produced for release during AGM03. I would also draw your attention to a survey by IFPRI published earlier this year under the title "Successes in African Agriculture."

We applaud these and other successes. But our common tasks are by no means done. Africa continues to face multiple challenges; sometimes in greater intensity than other developing regions.

Sixty-eight percent of the world's absolutely poor live in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, and 70 percent are female. Overall, the global rate of poverty reduction in the last decade was less than a third of what is required to meet the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015. It was six times less in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Some 840 million went hungry in the world's developing regions last year. Of this number close to 200 million are Africans. The number is increasing, although Africa spends around US\$18 billion a year on importing food, and receives almost 3 million tons of food aid annually.

More than two million African children die every year before they reach their first birthday. At the same time, child malnutrition causes stunting, weak vision, and blindness, and is a major ally of infections and death. Among adults, nutrient deficiency weakens the immune system, thereby increasing the extent and severity of HIV/AIDS, and the spread of other diseases.

Challenges, however formidable, create opportunities, and we must find the means, in step with our African partners, to grasp the opportunities.

No country or region has been able to leave poverty behind without continuing, positive economic growth. Growth alone does not miraculously change people's lives. Growth needs to be linked with pro-poor policies, effective governance, a frontal assault on corruption, empowerment of the poor, and other necessary preconditions. But without growth, there can be little or no movement towards change at all.

In most developing countries where poverty is predominantly rural, the numbers alone dictate that agriculture has to be the starting point of growth. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the agricultural sector accounts for 70 percent of employment, 40 percent of exports, and over 30 percent of gross national product. Economic growth means agricultural growth for many countries. Indeed, NEPAD has suggested a target 6 per cent per annum is needed in the agricultural sector.

The transformation of agriculture in the broadest sense – encompassing crops, livestock, fisheries, and forestry -- is the key to socially responsible and environmentally friendly growth and its positive consequences. Agriculture can reduce income poverty, but it does much more. Increased availability of food improves nutrition and thereby has a positive impact on health. Thriving agriculture transforms rural life, empowering both women and men. This inevitably leads to demands for improved education. The agricultural dollar also moves through the economy, enabling men and women who live beyond the farm gate to benefit.

The ecological imprint of agriculture is important as well. Some 70 percent of land use is for agriculture, and agriculture uses 70 percent of the world's fresh water. Climate change will only add to the environmental challenge. New agricultural technologies can lead to water savings. Improved crop varieties can also take up less land, thereby helping to save biodiversity.

Ladies and gentlemen: an agricultural revolution is needed and demanded by Africa. The “Green Revolution” which so aided economic growth in Asia largely by-passed Africa. The challenges are great – to multiply by 3 productivity rates (to be comparable with Asia) yet do so by simultaneously improving water use effectiveness, addressing land degradation, stemming deforestation, and addressing key global environmental concerns.

The challenges are considerable:

- Enlightened agricultural policies at the national and local level will be needed;
- Enlightened trade policies at the regional and international level will be needed;
- Investment in rural infrastructure, especially in rural roads, will be needed;
- Improved institutions capable of delivering inputs to farmers, access to markets and knowledge, at a reasonable price will be needed;
- And, certainly science and technology will be needed.

National Agricultural Research Systems must be strong, supportive and linked to farmers needs.

The CGIAR stands ready to help and wishes to play a role. All 16 centers have research and development programs in Africa; four centers are headquartered in Africa. Our scientists are already making an impact: on livestock; on water management; on improved commodities including rice, wheat and cassava; on natural resource management including forests and fisheries, and on improved policies.

The necessary agricultural transformation requires research that will create science-based technologies, policies, and services to support increased productivity; it requires research that holistically considers African farming systems and their components.

The primary responsibility for fashioning agricultural transformation rests with African scientists and policy makers. For us the question is: What kind of CGIAR can make the strongest impact in Africa?

5. CGIAR: A Dynamic Response

We cannot ignore or minimize Africa's needs, or delay our response to them. Indeed, Africa's challenges could occupy all CGIAR centers full time. However, the CGIAR by definition cannot be focused solely on Africa. We have to continue to develop an ever evolving CGIAR, appropriate to current global, regional and national needs; a CGIAR that gives Africa a central place, but is attentive to the pressing needs of other developing regions as well.

At its fifth meeting, the CGIAR Executive Council (ExCo) reviewed some of these issues in the context of recommendations for change at two of our centers, ISNAR and ICRISAT. Many ExCo members felt that the proposed changes at ISNAR and ICRISAT provided the CGIAR with an opening to re-examine its role in Africa as part of a wider examination of necessary changes across the System. ExCo suggested that these issues should be taken up at AGM03.

We have now reached a point at which it is appropriate to contemplate the next steps in our continuing reform: to search for mid-course corrections and identify new opportunities.

We are beginning to capture the opportunities presented by Challenge Programs, which have been received with enthusiasm among our partners, and brought in additional funding both from bilateral donors and from new sources in the private sector such as the recent contribution from the Gates Foundation.

We have to be particularly concerned with effective governance mechanisms, which make centers and programs run smoothly, with maximum impact and cost effectiveness. If the CGIAR is to continue attracting the confidence of donors, it has to demonstrate that the global and regional allocation of resources is rationally made on the basis of needs, and not necessarily on funding a given number of institutes. We must, as well, take into account the continued need for capacity building that will enable NARS to assume

greater responsibility. All that we undertake will have to be consistent with the redefined Priorities and Strategies that we expect from the newly established Science Council.

At the recent ExCo meeting, a number of members felt that three critically important issues needed to be addressed. To provide take-off points for discussion on all three, let me frame them as questions.

I begin with governance. The CGIAR has streamlined governance at the System-level with the establishment of ExCo, an experiment that has proved itself. A complementary arrangement for the centers does not exist. Such an arrangement should strengthen synergies between members and centers, create cohesion in the management of centers, eliminate duplication of effort, and reduce if not eliminate inter-center competition for resources. This takes me to my **first** question: **Is it time to consider consolidation amongst boards, especially those with similar mandates: commodities; natural resources management; and policies. Are there other evolutionary changes worth considering?** Research organizations in the industrialized world have created such mechanisms, and we may be able to draw lessons from their experience.

The next critical issue is the CGIAR response to regional needs. As the magnitude of Africa's problems calls for an urgent response, we are obliged to find the means of focusing on Africa even more strongly than before, while maintaining our global identity and fulfilling our global responsibilities. In doing so, we can give new life to the accepted CGIAR view that the System should adopt a regional approach to research planning in order to address the heterogeneous nature of poverty. My **second** question, therefore, is: **How best can we align existing programs of all centers, and construct new programs that are specific to Africa's most demanding problems?** We should, of course, involve the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) in our efforts, and we should look to the new Science Council for guidance.

My **third** question, taking into account the needs and possibilities of today and tomorrow, is: **How will the CGIAR carry out science in, say, 10 to 15 years from now??** Will business as usual suffice? Or will it lead to obsolescence? Should the centers, beyond the immediate content of their work, serve as catalysts of change, and as focal points of knowledge exchange in North-South and South-South partnerships? Of training and capacity building? Clearly, in approaching this question we will benefit greatly from the input of the Science Council.

These are crucial questions. The answers rest with CGIAR members and stakeholders. I look forward to a productive discussion that will lead us in the direction of practical answers. We have a rich and exciting agenda ahead of us.

5. Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen. I have already said that this opening statement is dedicated to the memory of Wilfried Thalwitz. Let me conclude by reminding you of a comment he made at the 25th anniversary of the CGIAR. He said: "The entire CGIAR system is vibrant and

alive, and justly proud of its achievements. It has made many changes in recent years, and will face the need for more as the development equation changes. I am confident that it will continue to be as effective in the future as it was in the past.”

I share his confidence.

Thank you.

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The next item on the agenda is an inaugural address by Vice President Awori. I invite Minister Kirwa to introduce the Vice President.