

**International Centers Week (ICW2000)
Monday, October 23, 2000**

“Charting the Future of the CGIAR”

**Opening Address
by
Ian Johnson
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Welcome

Good morning, everyone. I am really delighted to welcome you to International Centers Week. I am looking forward to a full and active participation in this week's critical discussions as we seek to think about the future and chart the future of the CGIAR.

When I was asked to take over the chairmanship earlier this year, and when I knew of this week's meeting, I decided to invite two very special people, very special guests.

The first is Wilfried Thalwitz, who is a former Chairman of the CGIAR, as you know. Unfortunately, Wilfried could not be here today, but has written a very nice note of support and encouragement. Wilfried had an enormous influence over my career in the Bank. He was a wonderful mentor and teacher, and I am in contact with him regularly. He remains in touch with the developments in the CGIAR, and if he had been here, he would have given us good advice. Perhaps we can invite him to join us at a future meeting..

The second special guest I invited -- and I am really delighted that he is here -- is Nyle Brady. I worked with Nyle some years ago on a number of different issues related, actually, to setting up international institutions, the ESMAP program and the Global Environment Facility. I have known him over those years as a very, very principled person, of great inspiration to me personally, and a good friend and mentor and as someone who cares deeply about the CGIAR. What is so impressive about Nyle is that he has kept up his contact with the CGIAR. So thanks very much, Nyle, for the very many years of advice and friendship and for being here to share your insights with us.

There are a number of other distinguished alumni here in the hall including former Chairman David Hopper, former Executive Secretary Curt Farrar, and former TAC Chair Alex McCalla and, for me, also a former colleague in the World Bank. I welcome them, and I welcome all of you to this event.

I feel very privileged to have been selected as your eighth Chairman. I am pleased to succeed Ismail Serageldin, a colleague and close friend, who provided this group with dynamic and farsighted leadership during the past six years. I have known Ismail as a colleague for many years, and I think his heart is also very much with the CGIAR and its work.

Facing the Future: Continuity and Change

Over the past few weeks, I have really been very much in a listening and learning mode. I have consulted a great many stakeholders, many in this room, on the themes and issues for this week. I have met with several members. I visited six Centers, and hope that by the end of next year, I would have visited them all.

I have seen the work of Center scientists in the field, and this is what has left the biggest impression on me personally: the interface of the farmer, the rural poor, and international science and research. And I have been impressed by the competence and the dedication of our scientists and researchers.

I have also had excellent meetings with Center Directors, at which I learned a great deal about their concerns. I was with the Synthesis Group that was organized by Andrew Bennett and the Oversight Committee, and just recently, I chaired a meeting of the Consultative Council in preparation for the deliberations, discussions and decisions of this week. There, too, I listened and I learned.

Throughout my soundings, I have encountered enthusiasm, and if there is one thing that I have never seen before, it is the level of enthusiasm among people here in this room for the goals and objectives of the CGIAR. It really is extraordinarily impressive how much people care about the CGIAR, and as long as we have that, we have so much going for us.

I sensed at the same time that there was a recognition that change was needed, and more importantly and more positively, that change would be welcome.

A well-structured set of discussions has taken place in the past few months, as a prelude to change. Consultations among stakeholders have been participatory, transparent, and rich in substance. Center Directors and others have made important proposals for our deliberation and decision. Options have been reviewed and synthesized into potential action points. TAC, under Emil Javier's leadership, has prepared a very important report on reshaping the CGIAR.

All of these activities have required intensive effort, a strong sense of dedication and commitment to change. And I want to thank all of those who have been involved in these planning exercises, because they have

given much of their time and effort, and they have helped us shape our week's deliberations. I hope these preparatory exercise will allow us to propel our work forward at the end of this week.

The CGIAR and the Global Context

The CGIAR started as an unique effort to mobilize agricultural research on the front lines of the battles against hunger and poverty. Its founding aims were to focus sharply on specific problems that would be resolved through agricultural research, to ensure that the products of research would be freely available as public goods across national boundaries, and to assume responsibility for the conservation and international mobility of germplasm.

Since then, new challenges have been added. The global environment, particularly climate change; ecological and natural resource management; public health and nutritional concerns are also at the forefront of our thoughts in development assistance and development work.

It is my belief that if we remain faithful to the original vision while setting it in a contemporary context, we will be well on the way to efficient and effective change.

So let me reflect for a few moments on the nature of the contemporary context of which I have just spoken, within which the future work of the CGIAR must be placed.

I think first and perhaps foremost, we must be very clear about where we are today -- hunger and poverty still exist on an unacceptable scale. The most recent "World Development Report," published last month by the World Bank, reminds us that -- and I quote--"destitution persists even though human conditions have improved more in the past century than in the rest of history."

You are all familiar with the details. One-fifth of the world's population lives in absolutely poverty, on less than \$1 a day. Almost half the world's population live on less than \$2 a day. FAO's annual report on "The State of Food Insecurity in the World" -- that is a telling title, "the State of Food Insecurity"--published last week, noted that more 800 million, I think it was 826 million, to be precise, do not have enough to eat. One-fifth of the children in the world's poorest countries die before they reach the age of five. Most live in rural areas, and many rely on agriculture.

We also know that the diseases of poverty inflict heavy damage on the poor. WHO Director-General Mrs. Brundtland said earlier this month at a meeting that: "A few main diseases are directly biting into the economic growth of poor countries." We will hear more this week about how HIV/AIDS is devastating many countries in Africa, where AIDS orphans

are becoming an overwhelming fact of life, and where a generation of rural workers and farmers may be destroyed. Over 40 million children in 23 developing countries are expected to lose at least one parent to HIV/AIDS during the current decade.

I spoke just recently with some farmer organization groups about the role of young farmers' associations, and couldn't help but be struck by the grim reality that in some parts of the world, young farmers' organizations may not exist in the future, because young farmers won't exist. That may have a profound effect -- a profound effect -- on the future of agriculture, and the future of rural development.

Poverty, though, is not just about income or health. It is also, as we are beginning to discover in much of our work in the World Bank, about disenfranchisement, about social alienation, about lack of security and lack of voice. It is a deeper and broader and more profound issue than we have ever understood before, and we should never forget that the majority of poor people live in rural areas and, as I said earlier, many rely on agriculture.

Next, on an issue that is very close to my heart having worked in the Global Environment Facility over the last number of years before I came to this position, we are destroying much of the planet's natural capital at a very, very rapid rate. The Earth's fragile natural resources are burdened by over-consumption, and by population pressures in poor countries.

We are losing biodiversity at historic rates, with potentially catastrophic but as yet uncertain consequences. The world has lost half its tropical forests during my own lifetime. The figure that I often quote is that we lose a country the size of Greece every single year to deforestation.

In some countries, the economic cost of producing clean water is greater than the economic cost of producing oil, and if we think of the future, and we think of a peaceful future for our children and their children, it is likely that natural resources will be at the forefront of whether we can indeed achieve stability and peace in many parts of the world.

We know that the world's marine fisheries are overexploited. Soils are constantly degraded and destroyed, with profound economic costs. I saw figures just recently which suggested that in some countries, annual agricultural production is 10 percent lower than it otherwise could be, as a result of soil degradation and land degradation.

A potential increase in the number of poor people as the world's population increases by an estimated 2 billion over the next 25 years, and possible shortfalls in our own ability to deliver adequate, safe water, good health and food, could have disastrous consequences for the poor.

Sustainable development to prevent such consequences is indeed a global challenge. And sustainable development means not only caring for ourselves today, but also leaving the world a better place for our children and their children. Economic growth must preserve the capacity of physical, ecological and economic systems to carry improvements into the future.

And if, as an aside, I can say I have one major concern about development assistance that engages all of us -- and I include ourselves here in the World Bank -- it is that we have got to consider whether we are becoming a little too myopic; whether in looking to deal with the terrible problems of today, we are not dealing as actively and as efficiently with the problems of tomorrow. Research, of course, is very much at the forefront of tomorrow's world -- as well as of today's world.

Our work will acquire added significance as the world grapples with these problems. The CGIAR must contribute to the solutions we seek in order to make our world a more secure and sustainable place for all.

Our research can help farmers to produce sufficient food to feed a growing world population with, let's face it, most of the increases occurring in poor countries.

Our research can create technologies that enable small-scale farmers to serve as the long-term stewards of the natural resources on which they, and let's face it, we, also depend.

And our research can help people better understand the public policy choices that underpin social and economic sustainable development for poor rural people.

Indeed, I would submit that our programs, structures and resources must be designed and mobilized to support these broad goals.

Into the Future: Six Challenges

Let me now turn to the future. The realities around us demand that we gear up for change. It seems to me that we must decide on the terms of change before we leave this hall on Friday. It is incumbent upon us to come to grips with the fine work that has gone on over the last 12 or 18 months and take decisions and move the agenda forward. If we don't, we will not serve the scientists who reside at the Centers, and work out in the field, working with poor farmers, working on important issues. Our duty is to them.

I would like to suggest the following six challenges.

The first challenge, I believe, is to maintain science and research at the Centers at the highest levels. This is after all a scientific and research network. The world has only recently acknowledged the fundamental importance of science and technology in achieving poverty alleviation and sustainable development. But this is where we in the CGIAR started, as pioneers in the mobilization of science and research for development, and it is where we have made the most significant contribution to human welfare. The need to keep our science and research at the cutting edge, but at the same time, relate it to the recognized needs and aspirations of the world's poor and then ensure its relevance to small farmers remains unchanged.

As agriculture seeks to be more sustainable, it will need to be ever more science-based than before. Agriculture has an important role to play in the future of our Planet. Indeed, in my view--and I have said this very often--food security--and I would add parenthetically that energy security is the other twin to food security--is absolutely essential to long-term sustainability.

In the case of agriculture, historically low commodity prices have certainly lulled us into a false sense of security, a true belief that the agricultural revolution is won and is behind us. But let's look ahead. In 40 to 50 years, which is not so far ahead, certainly in the time of our children, we may have 3 billion extra mouths to feed, and even modest income growth, which we have to assume and we have to hope for, will add considerably to demand. Estimates vary, as they always will in projecting the future, but it is likely that world food production will need to double by then, and that is an enormous challenge. And where will most of that demand come from? It will come from developing countries.

So if we are to eliminate poverty, we will need strong and sustained economic growth, and the agricultural sector is central to that growth. Research focused on productivity gains is absolutely imperative. But if we are to eliminate poverty, we will also need targeted interventions and public policies that directly help the poor, most of whom live in rural areas. The agricultural sector is an important conduit to good health and good nutrition. Research that links agriculture with public health is in my view vital.

And if we are to eliminate poverty, we will need to manage our ecosystems and natural resource base in a prudent manner. One in four of the world's rural poor live in or are adjacent to forested areas. So natural resources are central.

Agriculture is central to the objective of poverty alleviation, and we need to better understand the kinds of actions that can allow agriculture to coexist peacefully with natural ecological systems. And if we are to eliminate poverty, we will need to understand the actions in the rural

sector that can ensure social stability, provide safety nets to those in need, and ensure that rural social capital is enhanced.

In all of these efforts, high-quality research must underpin our response to the challenges ahead.

The second challenge is to ensure that the CGIAR captures and is fully characterized by all the assets of a new-age institution: lightness, agility, responsiveness, and cost-efficiency. Indeed, the CGIAR already has many of the characteristics of such an institution. It was a knowledge-based network long before business school professors invented the term. It has begun to use information technology as an instrument of research as well as knowledge-sharing. And in some instances, we have begun to function in a virtual capacity. These are all attributes that professors in organizational theory talk about when they try to describe a new-age institution.

But the one area that I would submit to you where we are not quite a new-age institution is in our gender diversity arrangements. Over the next few years, we have got to achieve a far better balance, I believe, in terms of our management and in terms of our scientists. The balance is still, I believe, out of line in many respects with the new international philosophy, and with what is patently right and fair.

New information-sharing technologies provide us with extraordinary opportunities to function as a platform for South-South cooperation. We are already utilizing these, and I am so impressed by the level of South-South cooperation that goes on in the CGIAR network. But how do we enhance what we are already doing? How do we use the new capacities to strengthen the web of relationships amongst farmers, amongst consumers, among civil society institutions, scientists, and policymakers? How can we keep costs down and reduce bureaucracy?

These are not rhetorical questions; they are at the very core of the quest for a new future, and they are at the very core of the work that needs to be done this week.

We must also have simple, clear rules for decision-making, whether it be on strategy, policy, or on administration. Indeed, I believe that this week, we must come to closure on the main elements of the future, and it is for you to begin thinking as I speak today--do you seek a more unifying approach to the work of the CGIAR, and if so, does the federation model outlined in the Synthesis Report offer opportunities for gains in efficiency and gains in effectiveness?

And surely we can be more effective in our meetings and deliberations in both agenda-setting and strategy, as well as in executive decisions. We must be nimble and businesslike, yet have the trust and confidence of all

of our interlocutors, especially those from developing countries. We must ensure that our overhead costs are kept to a minimum and that our meetings and corporate work are efficient and effective.

Let's look at the peer review systems. Are the current peer review systems commensurate with the need for world-class science? How do we ensure accountability to shareholders, on the one hand, but also to stakeholders? We must find a way of dealing effectively and transparently with both shareholders and stakeholders, and this, I think, is an important element of the CGIAR. It indeed has many wonderful stakeholders as well as almost 60 shareholders.

I now move on to the third challenge: to strengthen our position as producers of global public goods. The role of the CGIAR as a major producer of global public goods in agricultural research is widely recognized -- most recently, at the "Group of 8 Summit" in Okinawa, and at the Annual Bank/Fund Meetings in Prague, which I attended. I listened to many speeches and heard much discussion about global public goods, and what I found very encouraging is that the CGIAR was frequently mentioned as good practice, was commended as a model, and was singled out as an organization or an effort that typified and exemplified the global public goods debate. I believe we have much to build on in that regard.

This mode of operations, global public goods, has had a positive impact on the conservation and use of genetic resources and, thereby, on both food security and natural resource management. The challenge of keeping CGIAR research products in the global public domain has been made complex by a number of developments, including the increased involvement of the private sector in agricultural research, the expansion of intellectual property protection through patents, and the emergence of international regimes that may hamper the free movement of genetic resources across national boundaries.

We will have a challenging journey ahead of us on many of these issues, but our role and function as a purveyor of global public goods must not be underestimated.

The debate on global public goods, incidentally, is really just heating up. Within the World Bank, our independent evaluation arm, the "Operations Evaluation Department", OED, has recently decided to undertake a major review of global public goods. I have asked them specifically to look at the CGIAR, and I have invited Bob Picciotto, who is the Director General of the OED, to brief us later this week about his thinking and his work on global public goods.

This brings me to the fourth challenge, which is to redefine a framework for partnerships. The "Declaration and Action Program" that was adopted

by the Ministerial-level meeting at Lucerne in 1995 provided the impetus for the CGIAR to set up three partnership committees. These arrangements have brought new perspectives and new energy into decision-making. Is that all that we require of partnerships? Would the CGIAR and its beneficiaries be better-served by operational partnerships directly involving the Centers, or with the Centers serving as catalysts?

Many different kinds of linkages can improve our own effectiveness or bring about the effectiveness that we espouse. The perspectives of anthropologists, agronomists, economists, entrepreneurs, and other experts will ultimately strengthen the CGIAR. Collective action by farmers to manage land appropriately could have an enormous impact on global climate change, for example. So we have got to work with farmers to identify the research that is needed at the local level.

As TAC has noted very persuasively in its report, the regional dimension of our work must also be taken into account. During a recent visit to Africa, I was very impressed by the way the CGIAR is working in the field. We met with a number of farmers and farmers' organizations in Kenya. We met with Kenya's National Research Centers, with NGOs and civil society groups and farmers' organizations, and with the private sector--and here, I do not mean the multinational private sector; I mean the local village-level private sector and entrepreneurs.

Tracing those linkages and relationships takes care and patience and must build upon relative competence and comparative advantage. That is something that we must keep at the forefront of our own deliberations; not how do we act in isolation, but where can we make a difference, where do we add value.

The last 20 years have also seen a surge in private sector funding in agricultural research, and the private sector now accounts for around 90 percent of overall research funding. Michael Lipton, delivering last year's John Crawford Memorial Lecture, made a very persuasive argument about the massive shift in the role of the private sector in this arena. The marketplace is clearly efficient -- it is a very efficient mechanism for allocating resources -- but it does not provide the public goods needed to promote sustainable development. It does not provide the goods that the very poor need very often. We must therefore find new and creative ways of working with the private sector.

We must also review our relationship with national and, where appropriate, regional agricultural research institutions, and we should also consider how competitive funding might play a role in forging partnerships and knowledge-sharing.

I would also submit that electronic interconnectivity offers exciting new opportunities for creative partnerships, and it certainly offers a

tremendous opportunity for broad-based engagement strategies and stewardship strategies that can underpin the future of the CGIAR.

The fifth challenge is to keep our funding stable and secure. For some time now, total annual contributions have been in the range of \$330 to \$340 million per year. These amounts signify valued support and are very much appreciated. But are they adequate, given the complex nature of the tasks of today and tomorrow? I suspect not. Nor do I believe that agricultural research achieves all of its potential when it is supported for a fragmented agenda of small projects, as sometimes happens. Uncertain and *ad hoc* pledging of resources does not provide scientists with the assurance of continuity required for them to carry out their tasks free of frustrating disquiet. Is it time to consider change? Could we entertain larger programmatic proposals that might attract multiyear commitments, as well as greatly reduce transaction costs associated with smaller projects.

Could the increased interest in global public goods provide a platform for us to elevate our own sights and place the CGIAR at the center of such discussions?

I believe we should think about these issues carefully.

The sixth challenge is to devise the most effective means of linking our research in the CGIAR with the development programs of the countries we serve. We must also ensure a better strategic alignment with the programs of members, including the regional banks and the World Bank. In the World Bank, I believe we have been remiss over the last few years in not aligning our mainstream work in agriculture with that of the CGIAR.

Our research agenda, however, is congruent with the World Bank's commitment to reduce poverty and improve living standards through sustainable growth and investment and with the development goals recently reaffirmed by the Millennium Summit of the United Nations. Major areas of research directly relevant to these goals include integrated natural resource management, integrated gene management, rural development, and agricultural knowledge and information management.

New technologies created as a result of our research can underpin sustainable development, but these technologies will not flow through to developing countries unless multiple linkages are developed with the banks, with other agencies, and with the developing countries themselves.

I have asked our three cosponsors representative here -- Jacques Ekebil for FAO, Roberto Lenton for UNDP, and Bob Thompson for the Bank -- to begin thinking about how their own mainstreaming activities could really be aligned in a seamless way with the work of the CGIAR. If we work

jointly, and we work together, and see the CGIAR as part of a broader system, we can really make an even bigger difference.

All six of these challenges are interconnected. The required level and quality of funding to meet them will not be easily forthcoming unless we can demonstrate beyond doubt that we are really functioning as a new age institution in the fullest sense of that phrase.

We need to nurture the best peer review systems so that the excellence of our work and our science can never be questioned.

We must show that we have done everything reasonable to keep our overhead costs low, for with low overheads, more money can be directed to research and development.

We must ensure our relevance by drawing partners into operational arrangements from planning to research to the delivery of results.

And I believe we must abide by the rule of subsidiarity--broad macro direction in strategy, but not at the price of micro-management.

Moving On

Colleagues, you know better than I that agricultural development comes from years of dedicated effort and ingenuity--step by step, experiment by experiment, course correction by course correction, application by application.

The CGIAR has been at the vanguard of past efforts to transform agriculture, but past success alone does not guarantee continued effectiveness and impact. New times demand new approaches. New problems demand new solutions.

We must act, therefore, to achieve decisive change and quick wins. On my recent field visit to Western Kenya with Pedro Sanchez and Hank Fitzhugh from ICRAF and ILRI, I heard a farmer recite a really wonderful poem; it was very moving. We went into a village, and a farmers' organization led by a very articulate women gave us a poem. She said: "Our farms are sleeping, and they need awakening, and we need research. We need help in awakening our farms."

Those touching words suggest a motto for us as well. We must reawaken the CGIAR to the promises and challenges of tomorrow. I believe we have an extraordinary opportunity to reshape, rededicate, and reenergize the CGIAR.

The need for the CGIAR to continue its mission and work is every bit as great today as it was when it was founded close to 30 years ago, and I

would add that I think with some of the new challenges, one could even make the case that the need is greater, and I think we have got to live up to that challenge.

Finally, let me simply say on a personal note that I really do feel very honored to be part of this group. As I said earlier, it truly is impressive. I am so impressed by the commitment of all the people in this room, many of whom have believed in the CGIAR for 20 and 30 years.

My commitment is to try and serve you as best I can. I will do my utmost to sustain this Group's great tradition and achievements, and I am convinced that, working together, we can achieve our goals and at the end of the day, truly make a difference.

Thank you very much.