

# *Global Forum on Agricultural Research*

## **MINUTES OF THE 3<sup>rd</sup> GLOBAL FORUM STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Brasilia, May 24, 1998 - 08:30 - 17:00**

The Global Forum Steering Committee held its third meeting in Brasilia on the 24th of May 1998. The meeting was opened by Fernando Chaparro, Chairman. The session was open to observers from 8:30 am to 1:00 p.m., and was followed by a closed session from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m.

The open session was intended to allow effective interaction between a range of GFAR members while the closed session was devoted to decisions on management issues of critical value for the development of the GFAR.

The open session was attended by not less than 37 persons, including 10 GF-SC members out of 13 (EEC/ CAC regional forum being not yet established, WANA region and Farmers' Organizations representative being unable to attend this meeting). Non GF-SC member participants were NARS leaders, representatives of subregional organizations, regional representatives to the CGIAR, as well as IARCs, ARIs, CGIAR persons and a few donors.

The agenda of the open session covered the following items:

- a report of the progress made since the second GF-SC meeting in Washington last October;

- a presentation of the last development of the Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research (EGFAR) followed by a discussion on further developments and financial requirements;

- a preliminary discussion on the organization of the second plenary meeting of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research: time, location budget perspective and agenda.

- reports by the representatives of ARIs, Private Sector and NGOs on activities and consultation process developed since the second meeting.

- a report of the last NARS-SC meeting held on Saturday 23 May 1998, here in Brasilia.

- a discussion on the GFAR Program of Work and Budget 1998-2000, based on the revised version circulated after the meeting of the GFAR Support Group at IFAD headquarters in Rome on the 5th and 6th of February 1998.

The agenda of the closed session had the following items:

finalization of the Program of Work and Budget 1998-2000 to be presented to the GFAR Support Group on May 28, 1998.

a preliminary discussion on a paper to define a set of GFAR “guiding rules and principles” to insure transparency of GF-SC functioning and legitimacy of the GF-SC membership.

appointment of the GF-SC Executive Secretary.

election of the new Chairperson.

During the open session, the Chairman of the CGIAR joined the meeting for one hour of exciting and challenging interaction. He specially underlined the strategic role that GFAR should play in the emerging global agricultural research system as the unique neutral platform where all the stakeholders can debate issues of global strategic nature. Then he urged the GF-SC to focus on specific issues that should be reflected in the agenda of the second plenary meeting of the GFAR. He also stressed the need to devote great attention to the preparation of this second plenary meeting as a unique opportunity to qualify the “GFAR niche” in the new millenium. The CGIAR chair also stressed the key role that EGFAR could or should play and made a plea to the donors present to financially support this initiative.

## **1 Progress Report.**

The Chairman stressed that a regular communication flow has taken place between ICW 97 and Brasilia, mainly through electronic mail but also by fax and post mail to reach members who do not have regular access to electronic mail. Then he emphasized only the major elements which have been carried out for the current development of the GFAR. They are two:

The various contacts with the CEO of FAO, IFAD, ISNAR and the World Bank to thank them for their critical support to the first phase of the implementation of the Plan of Action and to discuss modalities for the establishment of the GF-SC and NARS-SC Secretariats. The Chairman informed regarding receipt of letters from each of the four facilitating agencies whose copies were circulated, which spelt out concrete arrangement proposals on line with previously agreed modalities.

The first meeting of the GFAR Support Group was convened by IFAD in Rome in February. This meeting was very helpful to shape the Program of Work and Budget 1998-2000. Regarding funding issues, despite additional pledges, there is still a gap to fulfill the financial requirement for the three year pilot phase budget agreed in Cairo. In particular, the NARS-SC Executive Secretary’s post is funded only for the first year, partly funded for the second year and still unfunded for the third one.

## **2 EGFAR Presentation.**

Peter Gregory, EGFAR task manager, informed the GF-SC on contacts established with other institutions involved in developing electronic communication systems i.e. INFOSYS, FAO, CABI, as well as contacts with donors. Reza Firuzabadi made a very comprehensive computer demonstration that showed the current potential of the pilot project (A planned on-line presentation was not feasible due to a lack of internet access in the meeting room). Further developments were also discussed.

The GF-SC members congratulated the two speakers on the important progress achieved so far in spite of an inadequate administrative and financial support structure. Nevertheless it was stressed that no further development could be expected unless an adequate budget is provided.

The CGIAR Chairman reinforced this point, mentioning that two previous electronic communication projects have been developed within the Bank, IPANET and the Global Waterpartnership electronic network. While the first is really successful due to adequate staffing and marketing approach, the latter failed to develop well.

The discussion also raised some critical issues for success that are (a) insuring that all partners (notably the NARS) have access to EGFAR and can benefit from it, (b) improving complementarity and compatibility with other initiatives, (c) marketing the project, and (d) assuring the governance

Finally the GF-SC members recommended that a technical group be established, comprising experts from other major initiatives ( FAO, European INFOSYS, etc.). As to the governance issue, it was agreed that the GF-SC should be the governance body as it includes all GFAR stakeholders. The executive secretariat was requested to prepare a note on critical issues for governance to be discussed at the next meeting.

## **3 Preliminary discussion on the next plenary meeting of the GFAR.**

A lively discussion took place stimulated by the challenging intervention of Ismail Serageldin on that topic. Regarding the timing, the urgency of tackling strategic issues such as IPRs, biosafety and biotechnologies as well as genetic resources management policies was recognized. It was also stressed that the regional fora should be associated to that event and it was recommended that the NARS-SC secretariat facilitates regional fora to address these issues during the year 1999.

Finally, the GF-SC decided to develop a strategic agenda following a bottom up approach. Members were requested to send written propositions to the GF-SC secretariat before the end of July. Based on these contributions and other key contacts, the secretariat will draft a strategic agenda and a budget proposal to be circulated by mid September and approved by next October. The GF-SC also decided that the date of the second GFAR meeting will be May 2000 and agreed to accept an offer from Germany for its venue in Bonn.

A consensus was also reached to consider that the activities to prepare the second plenary meeting of the GFAR should be given the highest priority in the GF-SC program of work for the coming two years.

#### **4 Progress report by the ARIs, NGOs and Private sector.**

##### 4.1 - European ARIs.

The European ARIs have developed a national process of consultation as a follow up to the colloquium held in Montpellier last September. The national representatives met in Brussels in early April 1998 and decided to organize a European regional forum in April 1999, for which an organizational committee has been set up. They have also identified areas where they feel they have a real comparative advantage on which they should focus. Non CG-mandate crops, electronic networking as well as advanced biotechnology have already been identified as areas on which efforts should concentrate.

##### 4.2 - North American ARIs.

The representative of North American ARIs indicated that the consultation process has not yet taken place. A concertation with Canadian scientists will take place in June 1998 at the annual meeting of the Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development. He stressed the need for information and awareness as a critical means to mobilize the North American scientific community.

##### 4.3 - Austral-Asia.

The representative of Austral-Asian ARIs underlined the difficulty to organize a consultation process in the region. Even within Japan, it is not easy. Then no significant progress has been achieved so far to enhance legitimacy of the representation. Internal concertation within Japanese organizations is planned soon.

##### 4.4 The Private Sector.

The private sector representative indicated that, although the CGIAR/PS Committee has not developed any specific action focusing on the GFAR, most of its actions are relevant to the GFAR objectives. It was suggested that, as the Private Sector does not believe there is a unique model of partnership nor a fixed framework for building partnerships, its major contribution to GFAR objectives could be to look at different types of partnerships in order to develop further private-public partnerships, especially in fields related to biotechnology and science proprietary issues. Regarding the issue of legitimacy, she recalled that as the Private Sector is a loose grouping of companies, it is not easy to organize a consultation. Because of this, he suggested that broadening the number of PS persons involved is important and proposed that the private sector representative in the GF-SC be someone other than a person from the CGIAR/ PSC.

##### 4.5 - NGOs.

The representative of NGOs recalled that the NGO community has endorsed GFAR objectives, but he thought that GFAR added value should carefully be assessed and

he suggested that NGOs could contribute to in-depth analysis in order to qualify and to quantify this added value. He indicated NGOs' concern that biotechnology should not be considered as the only major tool to achieve development objectives through research. An equal consideration should be given to agro-ecology and integrated natural resource management. As to the issue of legitimacy, he underlined that the NGO community is facing the same constraints as those mentioned by the Private Sector representative, in organizing consultations. He also mentioned that NGO representation in the GFAR should be different from that in the CGIAR committee and should ultimately be based on a regional consultation as the NGOs aimed at structuring their representation within regional fora. As a NGO food security conference will be held soon, a consultation will be organized.

## **5 Report of the third NARS-SC meeting.**

Dr. Paroda highlighted the main points of interest for the GF-SC that were discussed the day before in the third meeting of the NARS-SC. The report of the NARS-SC meeting is attached to this GF-SC report.

Each regional forum chairperson made a report of events and progress in his region. It should be highlighted that, despite serious difficulties encountered in some regions, tremendous progress has been achieved in each region since the Cairo meeting- except for CEE and CAC region where there is no progress so far - to develop regional fora involving all the stakeholders as well as concrete products: a regional research fund in the LAC region, newsletters in sub-Saharan Africa or networking improvement in Asia-Pacific.

Regarding the organizational structure development, three regional fora already have effective arrangements to set up a support secretariat while FARA has decided to establish a permanent support secretariat and has started consultation in this respect.

The debate stressed the importance of ensuring coherence and complementarity of activities to be carried out by the NARS-SC secretariat and by the regional fora and their secretariats and some key actions were recognized as critical to developing specific complementarity.

## **6 Revision of the Program of Work and Budget 1998-2000.**

The chairman introduced the discussion by highlighting the main outputs of the first meeting of the GFAR Support Group in Rome and by presenting the revised version of the Program of Work and Budget 1998-2000. He also indicated that priority should be given to activities related to the preparation of the GFAR 2000 meeting and a strategy be included in the final version. The discussion helped to clarify what types of activities the GF-SC secretariat has to carry out, reaffirming that they should be only of a facilitating nature, except for EGFAR which is an operational undertaking.

Based on that discussion, the closed session reached an agreement to restructure the program of work and Budget in three main components which are as follows:

a core budget component to cover staff and administrative costs (regular meetings, travel and documentation/communication).

institutional actions to strengthen GFAR membership and information \ communication activities, including EGFAR and the GFAR plenary meeting.

activities to develop strategic partnership and to feed the GFAR meeting agenda.

Three domains were identified: “biotechnology and genetic resource management”, “agro-ecology and integrated NR management” and global partnerships in non CGIAR mandated crops.

The program of work and budget was accordingly revised along these guiding principles and was presented to the GFAR Support Group for consideration in its second meeting on Thursday May 28, in Brasilia.

## **7 GF-SC rules and regulations.**

A discussion paper was presented on the rules and principles to guide membership, functioning of the meetings and election of the chairman. The paper was considered as essential for transparency and efficiency of the decision process within the GF-SC. Members were asked to send their comments by the end of July. The secretariat will then provide by mid September a revised draft for approval in the next meeting of the GF-SC. This paper should be considered as guidelines rather than Rules and Regulations. In order to avoid delay in the improvement of the GF-SC decision process and membership, it decided to create a vice-chair position and the GF-SC constituencies will be requested to nominate each one an alternate.

Regarding membership, the question of farmers’ representation was raised as IFAP has participated only in the Cairo meeting. Members stressed that producers should be represented in the GF-SC. In view of this, they asked the Executive Secretary to contact IFAP as well as to look at alternative solutions to ensure farmers’ representation and to submit a proposal for consideration at the next GF-SC meeting. The GF-SC members acknowledged the importance of the open session as a way to improve transparency and ownership. They then recommended that an open session should be systematically organized with a period for information and another for debate on a substantial issue.

## **8 Operationalization of the GF-SC secretariat.**

The GF-SC has appointed Alain Derevier as its Executive Secretary for three years.

## **9 Election of the Chairperson and of the vice-chairperson.**

Fernando Chaparro, Chairman, informed the GF-SC members that he has to resign due to a foreseen change in his position as Colombian NARS leader.

The GF-SC unanimously elected Dr. R.S. Paroda as its new chairperson. Sam Dryden was also unanimously proposed for the vice-chair position, but indicated he could not accept due to his position as CGIAR private sector committee chairman and other commitments. Nevertheless he agreed that the private sector should be actively involved in the development of the GFAR agenda and for the preparation of the second plenary meeting in 2000. In view of this, the GF-SC decided to postpone the nomination of a vice-chair. The GF-SC members recognized the outstanding contributions made by Fernando Chaparro towards the development of the GFAR concept and its implementation. They asked the CGIAR Group to pay tribute to Fernando for his tremendous work.