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**CGIAR Chairman's Summation**  
**Mid-Term Meeting 1998**  
**May 29, 1998**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have reached the end of a Mid-Term Meeting which, by common consent, was both substantive and decisive. Many friends and colleagues helped us to hold this meeting. Our heartfelt thanks are due to all of them:

- President Cardoso, for his interest and involvement in the meeting, and for a clear exposition on the importance of agriculture in his eloquent address,
- The Government of Brazil, for inviting us, hosting our meeting, and showering us with lavish hospitality,
- Dr. Portugal, for his inspiring role as a research leader, his excellent presentation on EMBRAPA's impressive achievements, and his constructive participation in MTM98, not the least being his concluding statement a few minutes ago,
- EMBRAPA colleagues, at all levels, for their unstinting efforts to make this meeting a success,
- The World Bank's regional office, for encouragement and assistance,
- The interpreters, for making sense of all we said, and helping us to understand each other, and
- Alexander von der Osten and CGIAR Secretariat staff for organizing this meeting, cheerfully giving many hours to the fulfillment of a myriad tasks.

Please join me in expressing our gratitude to all of them in a round of applause.

Most of all, let me thank you, members of the group and the system, who made this meeting what it has been.

**Governance:**

We have made important headway at this meeting. We kept a commendable pace, briskly making important decisions. But in doing so, we lost nothing of the collegiality, the mutual respect, the capacity to listen, and the seriousness of purpose that all of you bring to the table. We maintained a strategic focus in our discussions, had more substance than process in what we did, and manifested those qualities that make this group truly one where the whole is more than sum of the parts. And we also demonstrated that we can indeed be nimble in our decision making.

Any notion of Mid-Term meetings being superfluous was, surely, dispelled. Any one of us who wonders whether we could have done without this MTM has only to ask himself/herself: what is it that we could have not done? What could we have eliminated? Dealing with substantive issues consumed all our time, with very little, if any, left for private pursuits. Not least in this area was our willingness to address the really big strategic and overarching issue of climate change. It was indeed an outstanding session, and obviously the forerunner of more to come. Moreover, the blend of formality and informality, the immediacy of personal contact, and that sense of being engaged in a common purpose cannot be achieved by e-mail or any other form of non-personal communication.

An example of the unrecorded but important advances from the informal contact, the “positive externalities” of the MTM, is the role of AROs. At ICW last year, I had called for strengthened collaboration with AROs. I am happy to note that Cornell and Montpellier has each responded positively, and that intensified contacts between them and the Centers as well as NARS have taken place. I look forward to learning more about how these important projects are shaping up in the months ahead.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

At MTM98 you dealt with the short term -- the nuts and bolts which keep the machinery of the CGIAR in good order -- and the long term -- the issues and concerns which will occupy us and affect our beneficiaries well into the future. (A detailed account of the decisions taken will be available in the traditional end-of-meeting report.)

Our decisions were important, in some cases far-reaching, but they are not meant to pre-empt the recommendations of the System Review Panel which has undertaken the daunting task of helping the CGIAR position itself for the next century. Many challenges press on us. To have postponed action on such on crucial matters as clarifying and making public the current practices of the CGIAR centers in germplasm management is neither justified nor desirable. Action at MTM does not foreclose future change. So we await the System Review with great anticipation, expecting the sagacity of the panel to guide us

through many complexities. We stand ready to adapt as needed in the light of the discussion of its recommendations.

And we need to gear up for our consideration of the review panel's report. In doing so, we will be able to test the effectiveness of the streamlined way of doing business which I outlined as Proposition 1 in my opening statement on Tuesday.

**Proposition 1** requires the Oversight Committee -- in coordination with the Secretariat -- to construct the agenda and devise the most appropriate process for dealing with different agenda items. The committee will be in touch with you, and so will I, when planning special arrangements for our discussion of the System Review Panel's report. In response to suggestions from around this table, I plan to craft some actionable propositions for our consideration of the report and for the agenda in general.

### **Research Agenda, Funding, and Staffing:**

The research agenda we adopted at MTM98 reflects our resolve to make a double shift in the research paradigm, as a means of focusing our efforts on poverty alleviation, and natural resources management. The research agenda we have adopted is consonant with the MTPs of the centers. It looks three years ahead. It has two important if conflicting characteristics: openness and vulnerability. I say openness because it does leave us scope to make adjustments and changes in the light of circumstances. But we are vulnerable because a volatile financial environment might prevent us from undertaking all that we have agreed to do, and from achieving the full range of our expectations.

So, it was wise to retain a planning figure of \$335 million for the next year. This is not a ceiling, but only an indicative planning figure. What the real figure will be depends on what you and the centers will decide between now and ICW. I urge you to be generous.

But, regardless of the figure retained or achieved, I remain seriously concerned about the systemic financial issues which remain unresolved. I am referring to delays in payments, the proportion of restricted funds, financing overheads, dwindling reserves, and the fact that a number of important activities that I mentioned in my opening statement still remain unfunded, despite the heroic efforts of our Finance Committee.

In the context of these lingering problems, it is appropriate that the Finance Committee should move from emergency fire-fighting and crisis management to a more strategic approach as spelled out in **Proposition 2**. A mechanism should be in place for the first such strategic effort to be launched by ICW98. The results of such efforts, coupled with the recommendations of the System

Review Panel, will help us reshape our financing mechanisms for greater predictability, transparency and accountability.

Such changes will benefit the management of the centers, but above all, they will enable our staff in the centers to do their work better.

Looking ahead in another staff-related area, we endorsed in **Proposition 3** the recommendation of the recent consultation on gender staffing, committing ourselves to support focused efforts to address gender staffing issues and to expand these efforts to include additional staff diversity issues.

### **Germplasm, Intellectual Property Rights, Biotechnology:**

The whole constellation of **Propositions 4 through 10** revolves around four major pieces:

First, consolidating and disseminating a package of information outlining current practices at the centers. This is existing information, and it refers only to the Centers, not to sovereign governments or international organizations. The reason for consolidating this information into a single package that can be widely disseminated, is that there is ignorance and misunderstanding -- both beyond and within the system -- about how the Centers handle these matters. The appreciative response to this compilation all around this table suggests that it was, indeed, overdue. The package was ready this morning and is with you. The package covers the following:

- The ethical principles we adopted at this meeting,
- Agreement with FAO covering 500,000 accessions,
- A standard form for germplasm acquisition agreement,
- A standard form for materials transfer agreement,
- Steps centers intend to take in cases of possible MTA violation,
- Guiding principles on IPR,
- Statement on center interactions with private sector and others on proprietary technology, and
- Centers' position statement on biotechnology.

Our utmost thanks our due to center directors and board chairs for completing this undertaking. I am glad to note, as well, that PARC plans a public awareness campaign to explain to the world what we are really doing in the areas of germplasm management, biotechnology, and intellectual property rights. I welcome this initiative -- it is a far better approach than reacting defensively to allegations based on misunderstandings.

The center boards have also formally asked that the CGIAR Chairman or his designee should present the current position of the Centers on their behalf, in

alliance with interested partners, in the multiplicity of fora where these issues are being discussed. In doing so, I will, of course, reflect the consensus views of all of you. Our voice and views, on behalf of the poor and the environment, should be heard in the fora where discussions are shaping the basis of a new regime.

Second, the review and updating of existing material, providing clarifications and elaborations on the package that you now have in hand. That will be the clarification of the practices and positions of the Centers, and still, as with the current practices, does not engage the governments or institutions represented around this table. The final text should be distributed in time for review at ICW98. These documents, with the additional clarifications and elaborations, will constitute better building blocks for a comprehensive genetic resources policy, which we will all help design in the light of evolving international agreements and of the report of the System Review Panel.

Third, putting our own house in order in the area of proprietary science, completing an audit of current practices, and arranging for the development of advisory services. Your support of this “piece” ensures that it will be done, with the details to be worked out through consultation. The Finance Committee has acted in accordance with that requirement.

Fourth, clarifications in the existing FAO-Centers agreements, to be jointly agreed on by representatives of both parties. With respect to germplasm designated by the Centers as coming under the Agreements between the Centers and FAO, there are a number of issues that are currently under review including, *inter alia*:

- The guidelines for deciding what should, or should not, be “designated,”
- A clear interpretation of the term “germplasm and related information,”
- What is meant by “unrestricted access” for accessions which may be difficult to regenerate or are diseased,
- How to respond to requests for very large sample sizes or numbers,
- Circumstances under which Centers might reasonably aim to recover part or all of the multiplication and/or distribution costs included in fulfilling a request.

The clarifications will set down appropriate details and definitions, for the use of germplasm in CGIAR collections.

In essence, Propositions 4 through 10 have been adopted with minor modifications. Thus the resulting four “pieces” I have just described position us well to clarify and improve our actions, and they do not preclude our ability to adapt to new events including recommendations by the System Review Panel, or new national laws, or international statutes.

Finally, on the issues covered by Propositions 4 through 10, I note greater clarity in our view on biotechnology, which I could summarize as follows:

The CGIAR recognizes the importance of biotechnology in agriculture and natural resources management as one of a range of tools that can be used to increase productivity and address social and economic constraints to improving livelihoods for the poor in developing countries.

To further its mission of poverty elimination, food security and sustainable agricultural development while conserving the natural resource base, the CGIAR will:

- form strategic alliances and partnerships with both public and private sector institutions/organizations engaged in biotechnology, and
- develop need-based in-house biotechnology capability that will,
  - (a) address present and future needs of small scale farmers, and
  - (b) contribute to relevant capacity building of NARS.

In all its operations the CGIAR will comply with international and national biosafety requirements. In that context, I also note our collective wish to pursue the “genome meeting” that we discussed.

The issue of farmers’ rights has also come up. It is philosophically easy to accept, but operationally difficult to implement. We all want to ensure that poor farmers are empowered to the maximum extent possible, including their role in conservation and development of seed, and we of the CGIAR have supported and will continue to promote this philosophy. It is reflected in our ethical principles. We know that many others are grappling with these issues, and we look forward to the results of the discussions in such fora as the FAO Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

## **AND NOW?**

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I have been told by many of you that the Brazil Mid-Term Meeting has been “different,” that there was “something special” about it. What exactly does this imply? What was so different? What was special? What was its defining distinction? Well, Klaus Winkel, with characteristic wisdom, put it in a nutshell

when he said in plenary that never before has the CGIAR been “*more open, more participatory, more willing to confront issues.*”

In the spirit that Klaus described, we grappled with strategic issues, reaffirmed our commitment to the application of the best possible science to serve the needs of the poor and the environment, and conducted our deliberations in a resolute manner. This is a wonderful prelude to our consideration of the System Review. Summoning the same candor and determination, we can celebrate our strengths and confront our weaknesses as we respond to the System Review, and prepare to chart a course of renewal for the next century.

Think of these matters as you leave for home. Travel safely, and be ready for our next effort in Washington. Thank you.