

**DRAFT – *Please check against delivery***

## **MTM99 – Chairman’s Opening Announcements**

### **1. Thanks and Welcome:**

Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen. Greetings and welcome to the CGIAR Mid-Term Meeting (MTM99), the first formal meeting of the Group in China. In a departure from established practice, I will start with the Chairman’s announcements and adoption of the draft agenda. I will then address the Group on some of the research challenges that confront China and the world.

On behalf of the CGIAR system, I thank the Government of China for inviting us to meet here, and I thank the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) that serves as our immediate hosts. Thanks, as well, to the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) for their wonderful arrangements for “China Day” yesterday. And, within the extended CGIAR family, our thanks go out to the staff of the CGIAR centers located at CAAS for their generous and continuing support.

We are particularly honored that Mr. LIU Jian, Vice Minister of Agriculture, has graced this occasion with his presence. We appreciate his kind words, and I ask you to welcome his comments by acclamation.

Several representative of our host organization are here today, and I extend a warm welcome to all of them:

- TANG Zhenping, Director General, Dept. of International Cooperation, MOA.
- MA Shiqing, Director General, Dept. of Science and Technology, MOA.
- ZHAO Longyue, Deputy Director General, Dept. of International Cooperation, MOA.
- WANG Ren, Vice President, CAAS.
- GONG Xifeng, Deputy Division Chief, Department of International Cooperation, DIC, CAAS.
- WEI Zhenglin, Program Officer, Department of International Cooperation, MOA.
- GUO Ze, National Coordinator MTM99.

We are pleased to have you with us, and I ask my colleagues to acknowledge your presence and our appreciation of your support with a round of applause.

Let me recognize, as well, some special guests attending MTM99:

- David Hopper, a CGIAR pioneer and former CGIAR Chairman, who is here as a member of the board of trustees of the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR),
- Mohammed Ridha Bin Hassan Bin Suleiman, Adviser for Planning Affairs of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in the Sultanate of Oman,

- Regina Gata, a valued friend of many years, now representing Zimbabwe,
- Hoang Thi Dzung, a Senior Expert from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Vietnam, and
- Mahendra Shah, representing Maurice Strong and his System Review colleagues.

I know that all of you share my hope – or should I say expectation -- that before long we will be able to welcome Oman, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe as full members of the CGIAR.

Applause.

## 2. **Condolences:**

With regret, I have to place on record the deaths of colleagues and friends:

- We lost Robert Chandler in March. He was 91. He led a full life of service to the human family, as IRRI's first director general and in all his undertakings. So, as we mourn his passing, we rejoice in having known him. The memory of his dynamic leadership, his kindness, and wisdom, will forever inspire the CGIAR.
- William A. C. Mathieson, was a popular and respected CGIAR pioneer. He died in February at his home in London. Will Mathieson was 82.
- Mohamed Dahniya, who won the CGIAR Chairman's Excellence in Science Award in 1996, for outstanding partnership with IITA, and his wife Florence, were victims of the tragic violence in Sierra Leone.

- Nobel laureate Henry Kendall whose knowledge enriched our understanding of biotechnology died while engaged in a favorite pastime, underwater photography, in Florida.

I suggest that our condolences be recorded in the summary report of this meeting, and copies of the report conveyed to the families concerned.

### 3. **Congratulations:**

Let me move on now to some richly-deserved felicitations.

- IPGRI recently celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. IPGRI which began life as IBPGR is today the world's largest international center committed to the conservation and use of plant genetic resources. The work of IPGRI's 170-member staff is widely recognized. Geoff Hawtin's leadership is valued not only by us but by colleagues in the global agricultural research system.
- T. T. Chang and Joel Cohen, have jointly been awarded the 1999 Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement. They were honored for their "monumental contributions to solving the related problems of food production and distribution, and understanding the dynamics of population growth." Joel is truly a friend of the CGIAR, whose insights and counsel have been and remain invaluable. He is the guiding light behind a biotechnology conference that will be held immediately preceding ICW99. T. T. Chang was the principal geneticist at IRRI, up to his retirement in 1993. He is a world authority on rice genetics and conservation. His research has led to major advances in plant breeding, productivity, and disease resistance with a profound impact on

agriculture productivity throughout much of Asia, Africa, and South America.

Let us acknowledge these achievements in the usual CGIAR manner.

#### **4. Departures/ New Appointments:**

There always comes a time in our proceedings when we bid farewell to some colleagues and welcome others in to the family. My list is fairly short, but I suggest that you should hold your applause until I have reached the end of it.

First, CGIAR members.

- Ebbe Schioler has informed me that he will be retiring in July, so this is his final participation as a national delegate at a CGIAR meeting. Ebbe has been an exemplary member: totally committed to the vision of the CGIAR, respectful of what the CGIAR has achieved but never alarmed by the prospect of change, articulate and astute at these and other CGIAR meetings, supportive in so many ways including authorship, and highly effective in raising public awareness about the work of the centers. He is a true embodiment of the spirit of the CGIAR. I have personally gained from his friendship and support. We will miss you at these meetings in your present capacity Ebbe, but I can say with absolute certainty that Ebbe Schioler will continue to support and help the CGIAR in many different capacities well into the future.

At the centers, September seems to be something of a departure month for the CGIAR.

- Alfred Bronniman of ICARDA, Neville Clarke of ILRI, and Amir Muhammed of ISNAR are due to end their terms as board chairs in September. They have been exemplary leaders in demanding times. Their contributions to these centers will outlast by far their tenure as board chairs. They leave their positions with our best wishes, and with the hope that they will continue to be members of the extended CGIAR family

- Shawki Barghouti of ICRISAT and Grant Scobie of CIAT will end their stewardship as center directors in the same month. Each undertook the task of leading a center that was challenged to change its research emphasis, structure and operations. Both did admirably well. They supported and inspired their colleagues. In doing so, they have served the CGIAR system, its beneficiaries, and its partners. They have earned our enduring gratitude and our respect. Good luck, friends, wherever the future takes you.

Applause.

## **5. Adoption of Agenda:**

May I now ask for the adoption of the agenda.