

**CGIAR Mid-Term Meeting 1999**  
Chairman's Concluding Summation  
May 28, 1999

Ladies and Gentlemen:

**INTRODUCTION:**

We have reached the end of another Mid-Term Meeting. This was a landmark meeting, for it brought closure to the third System Review of the CGIAR. The meeting's agenda was heavy in substance, as it should be, and our decisions here have opened the doors to continued effort and effectiveness in the new millennium.

Many friends and colleagues helped us with this meeting. Our thanks are due to all of them:

- The Government of China, for inviting us, for hosting our meeting, and for its hospitality.
- His Excellency Chen Yaobeng, Minister of Agriculture, for participating in our meeting, and for mobilizing his ministry to support us.
- Colleagues at the Ministry of Agriculture and at CAAS for their collaboration and guidance in all aspects of our meeting.
- The Beijing-based staff of CGIAR centers for their support.
- 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 myriad tasks. I especially want to thank Ravi Tadvalkar and Selcuk Ozgediz for their effective contribution to the success of this meeting, Ernest Corea on whom we can always depend even though he is in "retirement," and Frona Hall and her colleagues who attend to the detailed arrangements for all our meetings.

Please join me in expressing our appreciation of all that they have done for us.

Most of all, let me thank you, members of the group and the system, whose presentations and deliberations lie at the heart of what has been accomplished at MTM99.

## **DISCUSSIONS AND DECISIONS:**

I said that this has been a landmark meeting, because it marks the launch of the CGIAR into the new millennium. I want to stress, however, that in putting our house in order to confront the momentous challenges that lie ahead, we have remained faithful to the core values and spirit of the CGIAR. Our sense of mutual respect, our collegiality, our capacity to listen and, above all, the commitment that you bring to every CGIAR meeting, was manifested as strongly as ever. Our discussions at MTM99 were open and frank. Our exchanges of ideas were constructive. Differences were aired in a spirit of mutual respect and, at the end of the day, it is clear that all we said and all that we have pledged to attempt in the future, are based on mutual commitment to a shared vision.

In an opening statement, I placed before you a set of nine propositions. As in Brasilia, where I formulated propositions for your consideration for the first time, much of the discussion here revolved around those propositions. Where necessary, some of them have been modified to reflect your concerns and wishes. A matrix recording the full details of the decisions reached by the Group in Beijing, and the next steps for implementing those decisions, has been compiled by the Secretariat. This will serve both as a record of this meeting, and as a guide to future action. Let me, however, in giving you my customary summation, present you with a flavor of our discussions, and record the consensus we reached on the basis of my nine propositions.

### System Review

Proposition #1 called on MTM99 to bring the third System Review to closure and, in doing so, to launch the implementation of all the action proposals emanating from that review, as amended and adopted by the Group. We have done that.

The action now moves to the centers, standing committees and other groups charged with the responsibility of implementing the decisions taken here. At subsequent meetings, we will monitor the progress of implementation.

### Science and Science Partnerships

Our particular challenge within the context of an unfinished global development agenda is to mobilize frontier science and technology in a frontal assault on poverty and hunger, and for the sustainable management of natural resources. We cannot do this alone. We are called upon to act in

concert with all our partners. We are fortunate in having in the Global Forum as the mechanism to accelerate consultation and action across the world's agricultural research system. So we will work together with the Global Forum, regional and national agricultural research systems, NGOs, advanced research organizations in the public and private sectors and, most especially, farmers in their fields, as we move forward.

The System Review, the Consultative Council that met in Brussels, the centers and system committees, presented us with action proposals. It is particularly satisfying that the final package of proposals for the research agenda presented here came from the centers themselves, in cooperation with TAC. These proposals commit the CGIAR system to pursue integrated gene management and integrated natural resource management programs as twin thrusts. The Group examined these proposals in plenary as well as in smaller groups, and the Group:

- endorsed the recommendations for the strategic orientation of research priorities, as well as the ideas for expanded science partnerships, formulated by the System Review and Consultative Council, and further developed by TAC and the centers.
- agreed that centers, in order to become effective partners in existing knowledge networks, should strengthen their databases, present their findings in a more user-friendly fashion, and expand their use of information technology, both for communication and dissemination.

TAC and the centers will integrate these proposals into the evolving research agenda of the CGIAR.

We separated the questions of research partnerships and strategic collaboration in Africa from other science proposals because participants in the planning effort now underway feel that the process has not yet reached conclusion. We noted with great satisfaction that planning has been undertaken with African leadership and on the basis of a shared vision.

And that took us to the next proposition. The Group:

- welcomed the consultations taking place between the centers and African NARS leaders, encouraged all those engaged in this exercise to continue their discussions in a practical manner, and to present specific proposals for consideration and decision by the Group at ICW99.

## Financial Strength

The research principles adopted by the Group, and the research agenda for the year 2000 whose outlines we have approved, reflects our resolve to make a double shift in the research paradigm, and to focus our efforts on poverty reduction. Appropriate levels of funding will enable the centers to undertake all that we have agreed to do, and to achieve the expectation of our partners and intended beneficiaries.

As I said in my opening statement, our current financial position is healthy, but in no way justifies a sense of complacency. System funding is endangered by many factors including difficulties in the ODA environment and by fluctuations in exchange rates.

Moreover, we need to remain engaged in overcoming the recurring problems caused by restricted funds, unfinanced overheads, uneven reserves, delays in disbursement, and the fact that some systemwide activities approved by the Group remain unfunded. We salute the decisive action taken by the Finance Committee to redress this last problem. The resolution of all these questions requires a long-term strategic approach and, clearly, the Finance Committee has moved in that direction.

These issues are all encompassed by the proposition on the system's financial strength. Thus, taking all these matters into account, the Group:

- endorsed the financing proposals of the Finance Committee, and requested the FC Chair to table at ICW99 a long-term funding strategy, a proposed structure for implementing that strategy, and proposals for managing the public awareness component of fund raising.

## Governance

I now move on to governance.

The review of governance questions at MTM99 reinforced the tradition of a continued quest for exactly the right formula by which to protect the principles on which the CGIAR was founded while at the same time undertaking whatever changes are necessary to improve effectiveness and efficiency. I appreciate the candor with which your views were stated and, as before, the ability of this group to identify a core area of agreement. In that spirit, the Group:

- endorsed the governance recommendations presented by the Consultative Council, specifically, the continued role of the cosponsors who will strive to ensure systematic consultation with members as they conduct business, the need to further strengthen the working of TAC, the rationale for folding IAEG into TAC, the need to redefine the composition and activities of the GRPC, and the basis for creating a Partnership Committee for Science.

We asked, as well, for a progress report on actions taken to be tabled at ICW99, for information.

Turning now to the question of CGIAR chairmanship. You have made it very clear that you wish the Bank to remain involved in providing the Group with system leadership. In this connection, I conveyed to you the continuing commitment of the Bank's senior management to support the CGIAR, and clarified the Bank's views on CGIAR chairmanship.

As some of you know, I may be leaving the World Bank in November. Should that happen, the Bank will propose to you the appointment of a person of recognized standing as full-time Vice Chairman -- not a CEO -- and a Bank Vice President as Chairman, but not spending 50 percent of his or her time on the CGIAR. If, on the other hand, I do not leave the Bank in November, I will be your Chairman for at least another year, serving close to full-time.

The proposition on chairmanship follows. The Group:

- welcomed the continued commitment of the Bank to support the CGIAR, and decided to await further consultation on chairmanship with the Bank in November.

Also in the area of governance, you reviewed the recommendations of both the System Review and the Consultative Council for facilitating decision-making at the system level. Those recommendations emphasized the need to be nimble, and the advantage of drawing the talent and experience of the centers into the decision-making process.

You decided at ICW98 and confirmed at MTM99 that the CGIAR will not be incorporated into a legal persona, and that no central executive committee will be making decisions on behalf of the Group. Decision-making is your prerogative and cannot be usurped by any institution or institutional arrangement. The next proposition is set in this context, and has been modified to incorporate the views expressed around this table.

The Group:

- Recognized that the Consultative Council operated very well, and empowered the Chairman to call a council into session as and when required, on the clear understanding that the council will be reduced in size. The convening of the Council is not going to replace the mid-term meeting. We agreed that we would take stock of the effectiveness of this flexible instrument in about three years.

Finally, to ensure the continuing credibility and influence of the system, you adopted my ninth proposition:

- The CGIAR will make a special effort to seek out a new generation of talent, with greater gender and national diversity in all key positions of the system, without compromising quality and standards.

## **CONCLUSION:**

My friends.

We have come a long way from the concerns that clouded the future of the CGIAR some five years ago. At that time, I proposed a program of renewal, you responded with enthusiasm, and we have progressively moved forward. Subsequently, and more recently, we submitted the entire system to an independent, external review by a prestigious panel. We tackled the review panel's recommendations with seriousness and vigor, from ICW98 through the Consultative Council's meeting in Brussels, to MTM99. Here in Beijing, we have put our house in order to better confront the challenges of the new millennium. Confronting those challenges will need yet another phase of renewal, not in the processes of doing business, but in the substance of the science we practice.

At International Centers Week, I will present to you some options of a science vision for the year 2000 and beyond. That vision must have two connected components. The first, is that our science must remain on the cutting edge. The potential of all that is happening in the biological sciences is truly exciting. We cannot drop behind. For if we do so, we will become irrelevant; and what is irrelevant eventually disappears. The second, is that the most advanced science we engage in must be clearly directed at providing the basis for advancement on the development front.

Every research project we formulate, and every research result we achieve, must be geared to participation in a global effort to fight poverty, abolish hunger, and protect the environment. That is an exacting and ennobling challenge. Let us accept that challenge in the spirit that we inherited from the founders of the CGIAR and which we have faithfully nurtured. Let us move into the future, rededicated, renewed, and resolute.

And now.... safe journeys.