

Meeting Summary  
9<sup>th</sup> System Council Meeting  
13 and 14 November 2019

Purpose:

This document presents the summary of the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the System Council held on 13 and 14 November 2019, as approved by the Council on a no objection basis with effect from 19 March 2020 (Decision Ref: SC/M9/EDP5).

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(System Organization Board and Council Relations Team)

## Introduction:

This document presents a summary of the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the System Council (“Council”) held on 13 and 14 November 2019 at the Jinjiang Hotel, Chengdu, China.

By way of overview:

- **Agenda items.** The meeting considered the eight (8) agenda items set out in the table of contents on the following page.
- **Decisions\*\***The Council took four (4) decisions during its meeting, described in the text.
- **Agreed positions and actions\*\*** The Council agreed on three (3) positions and actions during its meeting, described in the text.
- **Participants.** Annex 1 sets out a list of meeting participants.

*\*\* The Decision Points and Agreed positions and actions noted in the text of this document were first shared in the SC9 Chair’s Summary, as issued on 22 November 2019, and available here: <https://storage.googleapis.com/cqjarorg/2019/11/SC9-Chairs-Summary.pdf>*

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## Item 1: Opening Session

1. The System Council Chair, Juergen Voegele, opened the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting with an expression of appreciation for the hosting of this meeting by the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) alongside its 6<sup>th</sup> Global Forum of Leaders in Agricultural Science and Technology (GLAST) in Chengdu, China.
2. The President of CAAS, Dr. Tang Huajun was welcomed to the meeting and invited to provide some opening remarks which he framed around three key words:
  - a. Welcome to Chengdu and China and hoping that everyone has a good stay.
  - b. Appreciation for the collaboration between CGIAR and China which has been valuable and that he hopes will be even stronger moving forward.
  - c. Wishes that this important meeting is very successful as CGIAR plans for coping with new challenges by becoming One CGIAR. He emphasized the endorsement of China of the recommendations for One CGIAR.
3. With a welcome to all participants of the 9<sup>th</sup> System Council meeting, it was confirmed that a quorum was present. The System Council Chair then recognized:
  - a. New System Council voting members and alternates present, including representatives of Canada, The Netherlands, and South Asia constituency.
  - b. New non-voting ex-officio representatives of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development as well as the new Chair of the Independent Science for Development Council ('ISDC').
  - c. New invited guests including the Chair of the System Council's Assurance Oversight Committee.
  - d. Designated representatives and additional delegates participating in the System Council meeting for the first time from Germany, The Netherlands, ISDC and the South Asia and West Asia & North Africa constituencies.
4. The System Council Chair invited nominations for the Co-Chair of the meeting. The delegated representative of China, mindful that intense obligations as hosts of GLAST inhibited them from accepting any nomination based on their role as host of the meeting, nominated the voting member from the Latin America and Caribbean constituency as Co-Chair. The nomination was seconded by the representative of Switzerland.
5. Decision SC/M9/DP1: The System Council appointed Pedro Luiz Oliveira de Almeida Machado, voting member from the Latin America and Caribbean constituency as the non-voting Co-Chair for the meeting, pursuant to Article 5.2 of the CGIAR System Framework.
6. The Chair tabled the provisional Agenda, noting that it was anticipated that the whole first day would be devoted to the agenda item on One CGIAR. With a call for any other business, a discussion was proposed by The Netherlands on the role of CGIAR in a global food systems dialogue.

7. [Decision SC/M9/DP2](#): The System Council adopted the Agenda issued on 8 November 2019 (Meeting document SC9-01: Adopted Agenda).
8. One declaration of interest was made on the Agenda by Nicole Birrell, Convener of the Chairs of the Boards of Trustees of CGIAR Centers, who noted her role as Chair of a Center Boards of Trustees.

## Item 2: One CGIAR

### *Recommendations of the System Reference Group*

9. The Chair framed the session by expressing that a sense of urgency is needed as the world is heading towards a serious climate emergency. He highlighted that the high case scenario predicted by scientists is likely to be the real one with events expected for the future already being experienced. To contribute to tackling climate change will require addressing the three 'f's' as key elements; (i) fuel transition, (ii) food systems transformation with (iii) everything else being a footnote.
10. The Chair recalled the establishment of the System Reference Group ('SRG') – comprised of representatives of the System Council and all System Management Board members – at the 6<sup>th</sup> System Council meeting in Berlin in May 2018, where it was tasked to bring back to the System Council bold ideas for the future of CGIAR, with the results of that work being presented today.
11. On invitation of the Chair, Tony Cavalieri as one of the two Co-Chairs of the SRG, made a [presentation](#) outlining the package of recommendations being put forward that aim to create a rapid step-change in CGIAR so that it is fit for purpose to work with national and international partners to address the integrated challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
12. The SRG Co-Chair reflected that the SRG had been an impressive group which has undertaken a different level of examination aimed at a deeper level of impact than has been seen in previous CGIAR reforms. He outlined the timeline of events and broad consultations which has led to a [bold set of recommendations for One CGIAR](#):
  - a. **Recommendation 1:** A compelling mission for One CGIAR
  - b. **Recommendation 2:** Unified governance
  - c. **Recommendation 3:** (a) An integrated operational structure; (b) One CGIAR policies and services; and (c) One CGIAR at the Country and Regional level
  - d. **Recommendation 4:** A new research modality
  - e. **Recommendation 5:** More, and pooled, funding
13. Marco Ferroni, Chair of the System Management Board ('SMB') and also Co-Chair of the SRG, provided additional remarks around the SMB's critical role in guiding the SRG process and recommendations as part of its function to ensure that CGIAR is well positioned for relevance in a changing world. He reflected on this important moment in time to set a new direction and to commit to changes that will enable focus on and actions towards solving real problems.

14. The System Council Chair expressed his appreciation to the Co-Chairs and all members of the SRG for the incredible efforts put towards delivering to the System Council a bold set of recommendations.
15. In a recorded message, Dr. Qu Dongyu, Director General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), congratulated CGIAR for working towards the establishment of One CGIAR. He proposed that One CGIAR will facilitate stronger partnerships and the adoption of an integrated approach to research delivering on important knowledge for development, not only at global but also at regional and country levels. He expressed his hope that FAO and CGIAR find further opportunities to work together and to join forces towards a better world.
16. With an opportunity provided to all System Council participants to make remarks in turn (including all members, active observers and invited guests if they wished to comment), interventions covered the following areas related to the SRG recommendations:
  - a. The SRG process: The SRG process was commended as a highly collaborative effort bringing together many perspectives.
  - b. Achievements: The SRG process and the sound, pragmatic recommendations that have emerged, have already yielded some results as evidenced in funding commitments at the Climate Summit and amongst individual funders.
  - c. One CGIAR destination: There was strong support for the destination of One CGIAR which will take CGIAR more effectively into the future and allow it to harness its capability to deliver on key objectives to meet the challenges being faced by the world.
  - d. Rationale: With the world changing drastically, bold transformation is needed. There is urgency for action in addressing global challenges, particularly in terms of climate change and rising rates of hunger, and therefore also an urgent need for the transformation of CGIAR as outlined in the SRG recommendations. A 'go slow' approach will not work, with the timing of the implementation as crucial part of the recommendations.
  - e. Outcome: The recommendations towards One CGIAR address several challenges experienced in partnering with CGIAR, which currently requires dealing with up to 15 different entities and having to explain and navigate a complex system.
  - f. Recommendation 1: The climate-oriented mission is compelling, and the five impact areas reflect well on the current, dominant agenda.
  - g. Recommendations 2 and 3a: The steps towards unified governance and institutional integration are critical to ensure consistency between vision, strategy and operation so that the right decisions can be taken at the right moments and be taken directly into implementation enabled by an Executive Management Team ('EMT') and a smaller set of units.
  - h. Recommendation 3b: With support for the value of harmonized policies and shared services, it was cautioned that this should not fall into the trap of being tied to particular platforms, software or technical providers.

- i. Recommendation 3c: Strong collaboration at country level was very much welcomed as a way of better aligning research with country priorities and facilitating synergies with initiatives funded at local and regional levels. The opportunity for forging closer relationships between CGIAR and NARS was encouraged.
  - j. Recommendations 4 and 1: The development of the 2030 research strategy is an essential element of the recommendations. A key interest of the funders is that new program and funding modalities are compelling and facilitate impact while providing transparency, clarity and fully covering the costs of doing the research. The funders are committed to be part of a process which takes advantage of expertise in funding agencies along with that of the Centers and across the System. The design of the new initiatives needs to follow clear rules, procedures and principles and involve rigorous prioritization during design and implementation.
  - k. Recommendation 5: The importance of increase pooled funding was acknowledged as was the need for One CGIAR to present an attractive set of research programs and the need for funder commitment to the shared agenda.
  - l. Funding modalities: The fact that some funders have limitations on participating in multi-lateral and multi-year funding mechanisms was raised, along with the hope that CGIAR will continue to offer diverse options for making funding contributions through bilateral funding even as it attempts to rebalance this with pooled funding.
  - m. Implementation: The concerns raised about implementation have been heard and we should be attentive to these as the steps and transition plan are further developed, but not at the expense of any major delays in timing given the interconnectedness of the recommendations. It was also commented that the implementation of the recommendations will need to be undertaken in a stepwise, phased process that builds in important participation mechanisms.
  - n. Risks: While there are risks inherent in such a change process, there is also a very large risk of inaction on the part of CGIAR and that it becomes an artefact. The research landscape is changing and there are alternative sources of supply, therefore CGIAR needs to better position itself and its unique assets.
  - o. People: It needs to be recognized that people are the key resource of the CGIAR System, and they need to be an important part and focus of the change process.
  - p. Future events: A few important milestones for showcasing One CGIAR will be the 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of CGIAR as well as the Food Security Summit in 2021.
17. The Center representatives (in their capacity as respectively, the Convener of Center Board Chairs and Convener of the Directors General), and who participate in System Council meetings as non-voting members, spoke to an agreed statement on behalf of CGIAR's Centers to further contribute to System Council deliberations. The overarching message from CGIAR's Centers was one of strong support for a more connected, aligned and impactful CGIAR, and the message read out conveyed this broad support. In particular, the statement emphasized that CGIAR's Centers fully

grasp the enormity of the challenge of attaining a food and nutritionally secure world under conditions of increasing population and changing climate, and that the Centers embrace the efforts towards One CGIAR and appreciate the work of the SRG and the group's recommendations.

18. Whilst it was confirmed that the Centers support the direction of all recommendations, with the principles of adaptive management set out in the SRG document being important during implementation, the Centers' statement noted that the implications of recommendations 2 and 3A required more detailed analysis in order to best support the intended outcomes. It was noted that this topic would be discussed and explored by the Centers in a forthcoming Extraordinary General Assembly of the Centers, planned for mid-December 2019.
19. At the conclusion of the session where those who wished to provide observations had done so<sup>1</sup>, the System Council Chair noted that as a collective whole, the System Council's voting members had very clearly expressed their strong endorsement of the full package of five interconnected recommendations and encouraged that they be moved forward quickly in a thoughtful and inclusive way.
20. [Decision SC/M9/DP3: SRG recommendations for 'One CGIAR'](#):

The System Council:

- a. **Endorsed** the package of recommendations set out in the document entitled 'One CGIAR' System Reference Group Recommendations to the System Council (SC9-02);
- b. With respect to the implementation of those recommendations, **endorsed** the proposed roles of the System Management Board, the One CGIAR Common Board, the Executive Management Team (including each of its Managing Directors), the General Assembly and the System Organization with respect to the change process as set out in the document, with advice and inputs from a Transition Reference Group;
- c. **Called upon** the System Management Board and Centers to move purposefully to intensify collaboration to implement the recommendations, consistent with the target dates set out therein, based on clear milestones and adaptive management, ensuring that any key institutional decisions they take moving forward are consistent with the direction and destination of One CGIAR as set out in the package of recommendations; and
- d. **Requested** that the System Management Board update the System Council each quarter during the initial year of implementation, and thereafter at a frequency to be agreed.

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<sup>1</sup> A small number of attendees note that as their role was to provide independent assurance or advice to the System Council, they would note the conversation, but not express a view on the merits of the SRG recommendations at the meeting.



SC/M9/AP1: Transforming from the CGIAR System Reference Group to a Transition Reference Group

The System Council:

- i. **Noted** that the System Management Office will facilitate a process by which the System Reference Group will transform into a Transition Reference Group to support implementation of the endorsed SRG recommendations (as foreshadowed in paragraph 36c of the System Council endorsed SRG Recommendations paper), with that new Transition Reference Group being established on the same principles as the SRG, namely a genuine willingness to work “as one” across all parts of CGIAR.
- ii. **Noted** that the ‘Initial Steps and Transition Support to One CGIAR’ document provides a solid foundation on which to deliver that transition process.

*CGIAR Research Funding*

21. The meeting Co-Chair, Pedro Machado, introduced the next session as focusing on the goal and ways of doubling CGIAR Research Funding which was supported by three main inputs:
  - a. Presentation on the climate crisis and implications for CGIAR’s mission by Sonja Vermeulen, Director of Programs, CGIAR System Organization
  - b. Video message from Dr Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank
  - c. Presentation on investment in CGIAR Research towards 2030 by Enock Chikava, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
22. Discussions during the session focused on:
  - a. Recognition that there is a clear role for CGIAR in efforts to address climate change including through playing a leadership role in food systems transformation.
  - b. While areas of nutrition, gender are individually important, through the new mission and research modalities of One CGIAR it is expected that multiple benefits be realized across all impact areas.
  - c. A reiteration that partnership with NARS is a solid base for achieving impacts at the country level but will require CGIAR to rethink its relationship with NARS as part of One CGIAR.
  - d. While a natural concern for the Centers is funding availability and possible uncertainty during the time of transition to One CGIAR, there have been ongoing concerted efforts by many to secure more predictable funds into the Financing Plan for CGIAR Research over the past few years, and the 2019-2021 CGIAR System Business Plan is an additional mechanism to support that.
  - e. If the model would fit well within CGIAR, a replenishment exercise could be undertaken with the development of an investment case that speaks to priorities of funders and CGIAR itself and establishes an investment pipeline of proposals with impact and geographic targeting.
  - f. With several Trust Funds in operation, CGIAR will be on a stronger footing from which to approach them as One CGIAR, including possibilities at country level.

- g. The global ODA architecture is evolving, with specific, foundational SDGs becoming a dominant priority. It is appropriate to be focusing on climate financing as one of the only growth areas in ODA.

*Planning the journey to One CGIAR*

- 23. The session on initial steps and transition support to One CGIAR was framed by Marco Ferroni, with a call for a collective effort on implementing the endorsed recommendations. Recognizing that many processes will need to be systematized, he emphasized that a mental shift is required to approach this in the right way.
- 24. A brief presentation by Elwyn Grainger-Jones, Executive Director of the System Organization, outlined the initial steps and transition support envisioned for implementation of the recommendations, which had been requested by the SMB and discussed among its members in advance of SC9. Noting that deeper conversations on how to implement the recommendations would need to follow, the presentation focused on:
  - a. Some principles for a timely transition to operating as One CGIAR;
  - b. A process to move forward with, particularly, the 2020 timeline; and
  - c. Resources and capacities to manage the implementation.
- 25. The System Council Chair noted the comprehensive initial thinking demonstrated and opened the floor to comments and inputs. It was noted that:
  - a. The document gives a great deal of comfort that there is the right emphasis on creating momentum for change, and getting people working towards the new destination.
  - b. There is appreciation for the balance suggested between use of both internal and external resources brought in for the implementation steps, and recognition that providing opportunities for people within the System to be involved in the transition will help bring relevant insights and secure buy-in.
  - c. There is perhaps a need for an even stronger emphasis on effective communication on One CGIAR and during implementation than already exists in the document, including using different communication channels for different target groups. Communication internally with staff is critical for success.
  - d. There is a strong interest that the design and implementation of various elements of the recommendations not be solely an internal process, but involve funders, external experts and country stakeholders.
  - e. There is a strong expectation that composition of governance structures in One CGIAR include gender and diversity as important criteria.
  - f. As the implementation steps for new CGIAR structures are further developed, it will be important to consider the status of Centers including current privileges and immunities, and how to bring along host countries with those changes.
  - g. As an important asset of CGIAR, careful attention needs to be paid to the genebanks and how they are addressed in the future CGIAR configuration, and with respect to maintain the necessary movement of genetic materials.

26. Elwyn Grainger-Jones thanked the System Council for its valuable advice and encouraged them to provide any further comments. In response to a few areas of input, he and other System Organization technical resources shared the following:
- a. On communication, the case for change needs to be more widely shared to make sure all colleagues have the same perspective that the current steady state is not sustainable.
  - b. On capacity, there is clearly a need for a boost to not only the System Organization in this regard, but also Centers who will be undergoing change.
  - c. On managing implementation, it will be important to have success criteria to measure this and provide a clearer vision on how we are doing.
  - d. On governance and legal matters, it was clarified that the Nominations Committee to reconstitute the SMB will have equal Center and Funder members. Further, that is not anticipated that there will be a need to change host country agreements to achieve unified governance, although perhaps there will be a need to facilitative changes to governing instruments.
  - e. On development of the 2030 research strategy, it was added that a team will lead this work and hold a focused strategy meeting to shape the solution areas in which CGIAR can deliver. With important inputs from funders and national partners, it is envisaged that this research team will support a One CGIAR Executive Management Team in the second half of 2020 in bringing a CGIAR research strategy to the System Council.
27. The System Council Chair emphasized that communication will be critical in moving forward and made a special request, through the Center representatives present, for all Center Board Chairs and Directors General to be champions in the process by articulating key messages to their teams and helping to find solutions. He offered SRG members as a resource for communication with Center staff and Boards as considered appropriate by Center leadership teams. He urged that it is a job for every person connected with CGIAR to collectively change perception within and outside of CGIAR.

## Opening Day 2

28. In opening the second day, the Chair reflected on the importance of communicating in an effective way the important decision taken by the System Council to endorse the System Reference Group recommendations for One CGIAR. The Chair proposed that a single whole of CGIAR staff communication be issued from the System Council voting members to meet the need for all staff to receive the same message at the same time. It was proposed that feedback be provided during the day on an initial draft, and that the communique would be finalized by the close of the meeting.

## Item 3: Funding CGIAR

29. The Chair framed the agenda item as following on from the commitments made by System Council members on the previous day on funding for CGIAR over the next few years. He then invited Jamie Craig, Director of Financial and Digital Services of the System Organization to present a short slide deck on the status of delivery against the 2019-2021 CGIAR Research Financial Plan (FinPlan).

30. Expressing appreciation for the presentation, the Chair noted the positive increase in both volume of funding and in pooled funding, signaling renewed confidence in CGIAR, whilst recognizing that there is still a challenge to fill some gaps in 2020.
31. He invited further inputs on commitments and reflections on the FinPlan, with the following themes emerging:
  - a. Several funders indicated increased commitments of funding and multi-year commitments with a strong focus on Windows 1 and 2.
  - b. Full implementation of the One CGIAR approach with development of a strong research agenda and compelling programs is key for funders in preparing cases for increased contributions to CGIAR and for increased amounts to be included in the pooled funding.
  - c. A new regional focus in One CGIAR offers opportunities for funding through regional and country missions and initiatives.
  - d. Encouragement to share more information with those who are managing Centers and Center finances, to enable good decision-making and planning.
  - e. While some funders are making commitments to pooled funding, it is important that mechanisms allow funding for specific areas that contribute to individual funders' key priorities.
  - f. Further information was requested on how the multi-year investment plan will work within the transition to One CGIAR, and what may be expected in terms of the increase in pooled funding.
  - g. It was noted that bilateral funding will continue to play an important role in One CGIAR financing modalities, including from country program sources, in a more balanced way.
  - h. Additional opportunities for funding exist within climate funds and envelopes which CGIAR may be able to better access based on delivering as One CGIAR.
  - i. There was strong appreciation for the increased information availability and transparency in the system.
32. The System Council Chair expressed appreciation to each funder for their commitment of funds to CGIAR and their ongoing collaboration with CGIAR as key funding partners. He noted that funders are watching closely what each other is doing and should be commended for setting good examples for others to follow.
33. Jamie Craig then provided a short demonstration of the CGIAR Financial Dashboards<sup>2</sup> that have been developed and are available on the CGIAR website as a means of providing information collected from audited financial reports of CGIAR legal entities (Centers and the System Organization) in a transparent and user-friendly way.
34. Some reflections shared from the demonstration included:
  - a. The dashboards represent huge progress from what was previously available, especially with the ability to drill down to project level, and can help Centers, Boards and funders understand the financing situation across CGIAR.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cgiar.org/impact/finance-reports/dashboard/funder-analysis/>

- b. Care should be taken on how some of the information is communicated, with the example noted of some Window 1 funders not being visible due to the routing of their funds through Window 1, which is administered by the CGIAR Trust Fund.
- c. It would be useful to have visibility on the transaction costs associated with the various funding 'windows' to contribute to the case for more pooled funding.
- d. In addition to this valuable finance information, there is also a related need for more information on CGIAR overall, its programming and its governance for new funder personnel and agencies.

#### Item 4: CGIAR Performance

35. The meeting Co-Chair framed the agenda item on CGIAR Performance by drawing attention to the printed copy of the 2018 Performance Report, the second edition of this new format of reporting, as provided to participants of the meeting.
36. On invitation by the Co-Chair, Sonja Vermeulen, Director of Programs of the System Organization led the System Council through a [presentation](#) of some highlights from the 2018 CGIAR Performance Report<sup>3</sup>, developed based on information and data coming from new online monitoring and reporting systems brought together in an interoperable platform.
37. A live demonstration of the [Results Dashboard](#), now available online<sup>4</sup>, showcased highlights of this new tool. The Director of Programs noted that it represents both; (i) a democratization and transparency of data, and (ii) One CGIAR in action through a collective exercise.
38. The Session Chair opened the floor to the System Council, with the following questions and comments arising:
  - a. A question on the definition of 'innovation' and how 'new' things were handled was responded to by pointing to a summary definition on the dashboard, a page available behind each criterion, and the stage of innovation presented on the side of the page;
  - b. A question about how the portfolio is performing in terms of activities being on or off track and how this can feed into decisions on what to continue or not;
  - c. A comment on the importance of moving towards IATI<sup>5</sup> compliance and publishing in line with the IATI standard, as many funders are keen to be able to look at what all organizations are doing in a country, or further levels, without having to go to each organization's information source;
  - d. Appreciation for the availability of data on capacity development activities of CGIAR including PhD trainees disaggregated by gender;
  - e. A question on whether an indication on performance towards CGIAR's Strategy and Results Framework broad targets can be included consistently in reports;

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<sup>3</sup> CGIAR Performance Report 2018 is available at: <https://www.cgiar.org/annual-report/performance-report-2018/>

<sup>4</sup> CGIAR Results Dashboard is available online at: <https://cgiar.org/impact/results-dashboard/>

<sup>5</sup> International Aid Transparency Initiative: <https://iatistandard.org/en/>

- f. A comment that CGIAR could play a key role in filling knowledge gaps of other agencies and countries with this type of evidence-based science information;
  - g. A call for capturing more of the performance of the science to complement the great information made available on how the research is translated and relates to development impacts;
  - h. A call for the report to be made available earlier given that the need for information and stories to accompany budget requests comes much earlier in the year for many funders; and
  - i. A call for some indication, possibly in a graphic format, of how the performance report links with the work on impact assessment and on evaluation, and a focus on showcasing science impact beyond bibliographic indicators.
39. The Director of Programs expressed appreciation for the interventions as highly valuable input into strengthening future reporting efforts. She emphasized that it is critical to build better tracking across the different entities that feed into the spheres of control, influence and interest so that milestone work can be traced to impact in the real world. She closed by recalling that there were two promised reporting moments for the SRF in 2022 and 2030 which will be worked towards.

#### Item 5: CGIAR advisory services

40. The meeting Co-Chair framed the item by highlighting that in 2018, the System Council had approved terms of reference for the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC), the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), and the CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat (Shared Secretariat) with 2019 anticipated as a transition year for these advisory services. The System Council received an update on the transition at its 8<sup>th</sup> meeting in Addis Ababa in May 2019 and approved a new Chair and five members of the ISDC in August 2019.
41. The Session Chair then invited [Holger Meinke](#), new Chair of the ISDC, to provide a briefing on the ISDC and the CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat, along with a forward-looking view on delivering independent, highly valued advice to CGIAR.
42. The ISDC Chair's [presentation](#) offered information on the following areas:
- a. Overview of the 2019 ISDC appointment process and the newly appointed Chair and members with a highlight of their areas of expertise and experience;
  - b. Ideas for how ISDC can add value in a time of transformational change;
  - c. Proposed priorities and options for activities of the advisory services as reflected in a [refreshed 2020-2021 workplan and suggested budget](#); and
  - d. An update on the staffing of the Shared Secretariat, including the new Director, Allison Grove-Smith, now in place.
43. The Chair of the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA), Karen Macours, then provided a [presentation](#) focused on what is known with confidence about CGIAR impacts on climate and nutritional outcomes. She highlighted the rigor revolution in impact assessment which raises a key question of whether a difference can be attributed to particular innovations.

44. Considering the broader agenda being developed ahead, a key message from the SPIA Chair was that if nutrition is the goal for example then there is a need to target nutrition and target the people who can benefit from it.
45. The Session Chair thanked both Chairs for their insightful presentations, reflecting that these are important yet sometimes complex areas which the System Council would benefit from more time to understand and discuss.

## Item 6: CGIAR System 3-year Business Plan

### *Part A: Brief check-in on progressing the 10 actions*

46. The System Council Chair recalled the approval one year previously of the inaugural [3-year CGIAR System Business Plan](#)<sup>6</sup> at the 7<sup>th</sup> System Council meeting in Seattle, and invited Elwyn Grainger-Jones to provide a check-in on the progress of the ten Actions therein.
47. The Executive Director presented a brief set of slides showcasing whether actions were fully on track/achieved, mostly on track, or encountering challenges, along with some headlines on the status. He outlined that most of the activities were fully on track and some even already achieved. He observed that only two are requiring additional effort to move forward, which reflected an improvement on progress since the last update in May 2019.
48. With reference to Action 9 to ‘strengthen collective resource mobilization and communication efforts’ some concern was expressed that there remains a fragmented and siloed approach to promoting individual Centers and their work without mention of CGIAR in some cases. Noting that it is a requirement for Centers to include a reference to CGIAR for Window 1 and 2 funding, there was a call for more strategic and consolidated efforts around communication and resource mobilization, recognizing that there are various CGIAR communities of practice that are working further on this.

### *Part B: Elevating gender equality research*

49. The Chair recalled the strong interest from both CGIAR and funders that gender equality research be elevated, strengthened and better positioned, with a dedicated action included in the Business Plan to develop a new CGIAR Platform to: (i) generate greater visibility for innovative gender equality research conducted across CGIAR; (ii) have stronger convening power; (iii) be able to fully embed gender equality in the fabric of CGIAR research; and (iv) display global leadership on gender quality in food systems research.
50. The SMB Chair was invited to outline the [recommendation of the SMB](#) for a CGIAR Gender Equality in Food Systems Research Platform that would follow the

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<sup>6</sup> SC/M7/DP12: CGIAR System 3-year Business Plan (2019-2021) was approved by the System Council.



arrangements of the GENDER proposal<sup>7</sup> as well as a [transition plan](#) that lays out the means and process for a wider set of activities to be incorporated that includes all Centers and the most strategic elements of the ENGAGE proposal<sup>8</sup>.

51. On invitation by the System Council Chair, the Chair of the ISDC, Holger Meinke, provided a short statement on the assessment process moderated by the ISDC that followed submissions made to the call for proposals. It was noted that the ISDC followed its newly mandated function by commissioning recognized experts in this field to serve as reviewers and considering the detailed comments in developing its advice. With two proposals of high quality, the ISDC considered that the GENDER proposal had a more innovative approach for the future CGIAR but was pleased that the SMB had clearly recognized that there were valuable components in both proposals that should be taken forward.
52. In the discussion that followed, the process was commended, and the collaborative outcome supported. A few key points included:
  - a. With reference to the operation of other Platforms, it was emphasized that this Gender Platform should not replace the work in the Centers, but be a mechanism to elevate the performance in this area across the system.
  - b. There is interest in maintaining strong momentum in this area and for funders to stay engaged in as constructive a way as possible.
  - c. It was expressed that the enthusiasm for the process and the strong proposal for the Platform will be followed closely by funding opportunities.
  - d. It is also important that work on strengthening gender equality in research be complemented by strengthening of gender in CGIAR's workplaces.
53. [SC/M9/DP4: Elevating gender equality research](#)  
Pursuant to Article 4(s) of the CGIAR System Framework, the System Council **approved** the recommended arrangements for a CGIAR Gender Equality in Food Systems Research Platform under the GENDER proposal and transition plan.

#### *Part C: Taking forward Gender, Diversity and Inclusion*

54. The Chair recalled that Action 4 of the CGIAR System 3-year Business Plan 2019-2021 on People Management outlined a process for the design and implementation of a Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Framework including an opportunity for the System Council to provide strategic reflections before it is finalized for approval by the SMB.
55. The Chair invited [Claudia Sadoff](#), SMB Gender Champion, to introduce the elements for taking forward Gender, Diversity and Inclusion ('GDI'), which included:

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<sup>7</sup> The proposal for the 'Generating Evidence and New Directions for Equitable Rights (GENDER) Platform) can be found at: [https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2019/10/0d3b75be-190821\\_revised-proposal-for-resubmission-1.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2019/10/0d3b75be-190821_revised-proposal-for-resubmission-1.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> The proposal for the 'Enabling Global Agricultural Research for gender Equality (ENGAGE) Platform can be found at: [https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2019/10/aa7226c8-2\\_-engage-gender-platform\\_revised-proposal-aug-21-2019.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2019/10/aa7226c8-2_-engage-gender-platform_revised-proposal-aug-21-2019.pdf)



- a. Outlining that over past months there has been intense work led by the CGIAR Community of Practice of Human Resources professionals on developing the [Framework](#) and [Action Plan](#), including consultations in which over 200 comments were received from Board Chairs, Directors General, Chairs of Audit Committees and others. The GDI Framework is built on five key principles and accompanied by the Action Plan with targets and milestones which will be reviewed and adapted, initially every six months;
  - b. Recognizing that while committed to the implementation of the overall Framework, every Center has its own challenges and different contexts in which it must operate, which is taken into account in the setting of benchmarks and Center-own priorities;
  - c. Announcing Fiona Bourdin-Farrell as the incoming [Gender, Diversity and Inclusion Senior Adviser](#) who brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in this area to key tasks for moving forward the Framework and Action Plan in collaboration with Centers and other entities across CGIAR;
  - d. Highlighting that in the [snapshot of proportional gender representation](#) from end-September 2019 data, improvement can be seen in ten Centers with more than half within 1% of the target of 35%. While three Centers have remained steady and three Centers have temporarily slid back from making progress, the overall progress being made is real;
  - e. Recognizing that this progress shows the level of engagement of Center professionals in this area and Center leadership, as well as the encouragement provided by the System Council; and
  - f. Concluding that while there has been remarkable improvement, there is still much work to do and ‘tone from the top’ remains a vital element for successful implementation. The journey to One CGIAR now offers a wonderful opportunity to integrate these important values and structures into the next generation of CGIAR.
56. In the discussion that followed, key inputs were provided, including that:
- a. The work undertaken to bring all these elements to the Council shows great progress and were commended;
  - b. There is commitment from Centers to work on the GDI Framework and Action Plan, noting that to achieve the required level of implementation and compliance will require some dedicated resources;
  - c. It is hoped that in time more ambitious targets could be worked towards;
  - d. It is necessary to see that gender, diversity and inclusion practices and targets also be extended into the new research portfolio, the new One CGIAR Executive Management Team, and the System Council itself; and
  - e. It is good to see the great support in place for moving forward gender, diversity and inclusion by the Human Resources professionals and the incoming Senior Adviser, but this must be backed by Center and system leadership playing their vital role to make this happen.

57. The System Council Chair reflected that at the World Bank they have 50% representation of women at leadership level, which is possible to achieve when dedicated attention is paid to such goals. He noted that there is consensus that future appointments in One CGIAR structures and the System Council need to take gender, diversity and inclusion practices and targets on board.
58. [SC/M9/AP2: Taking forward Gender, Diversity and Inclusion](#)  
The System Council:
- i. **Expressed** support for the proposed 'Framework for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion in CGIAR's Workplaces' and the accompanying proposed 'Action Plan for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion in CGIAR's Workplaces' covering the 2-year period 2020-2021;
  - ii. **Noted** progress in the proportional representation of women in CGIAR Centers and the CGIAR System Organization and the measures proposed in the proposed Framework and Action Plan to address underlying causes in areas where representation is not at target levels; and
  - iii. **Highlighted** the key opportunity presented by the transition to One CGIAR to enact the diversity principles at all levels.

## Item 7: System Council committee updates

59. The Co-Chair introduced the agenda item by recalling that there are two standing committees of the System Council<sup>9</sup>, including:
- a. The Strategic Impact, Monitoring Evaluation Committee (SIMEC); and
  - b. The Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC).
60. On invitation by the Co-Chair, the Chair of the AOC, [Saad Bounjoua](#), spoke to a [short slide deck](#) on the Committee's activities to date and 2020 focus areas;
- a. Highlighting that while the AOC remains relatively new, it has made steady progress in discharging its responsibilities, and growing in ability to provide adequate assurance in a complex environment;
  - b. Emphasizing that coordination with other governance bodies is critical for achieving the priority of continuous improvement of the quality of assurance being provided across CGIAR; and
  - c. Noting that a key 2020 focus of the AOC will be to ensure that CGIAR further enhances its approach to managing inherent risk around ethics as a topic that touches many aspects of CGIAR's work.
61. The Co-Chair then invited [Michel Bernhardt](#), Chair of SIMEC to provide a brief [update on SIMEC's work](#) in which he:
- a. Presented some highlights around supporting the transition of the advisory services, stewarding a process around 'Connecting the Dots' for stronger integration of advisory services into System decision-making and supporting the ISDC appointment process;
  - b. Made a request for inputs on the advisory services workplan so that this can

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<sup>9</sup> Information on the System Council Standing Committees can be found at: <https://cgiar.org/how-we-work/governance/system-council/system-council-standing-committees/>

- truly reflect the needs of the System Council for advice, especially in the changing landscape towards One CGIAR; and
- c. Called for ideas on the optimal role SIMEC can play to best serve the System Council in the changing system architecture and move towards a research strategy and set of programs that involve a greater co-design approach.
62. Opening the floor the following reflections were provided:
- a. Appreciation was expressed for the important role SIMEC has played in overseeing the transition of the advisory services to their new arrangements, noting that there is still some need to explore how to best tie the advisory services into the new destination of One CGIAR and the journey to get there;
  - b. With the move to One CGIAR it should be expected that the work of SIMEC remains valuable, but may take on a slightly more relaxed level of activity as a good sign of the increased maturity of other assurance and advisory mechanisms; and
  - c. On the topic of co-design, some funders cautioned that they have strict regulations around co-design of programs that they then provide funding to and that care should be taken on the direct involvement of funders.

#### Item 8: Other Business and 2020 meeting dates

63. Recalling that two items were raised during the meeting for ‘other business’, the System Council Chair invited the following:
- a. Discussion on the role of CGIAR in the global food system dialogue.
  - b. Hearing the experience of ICARDA in moving from its headquarters premises to co-location arrangements with NARS in various countries.
64. On the role of CGIAR in the global food system dialogue it was agreed that:

#### SC/M9/AP3: Role of CGIAR in global food system dialogue

The System Council:

- i. **Recognized** the value of a common narrative around global food systems to move the dialogue, tackle polarization in a complex policy area and bridge the gap between policy and science; and
  - ii. **Requested** that potential mechanisms be explored for a global approach to the food systems dialogue (including, but not necessarily, an intergovernmental panel approach) and that the outcomes of that exploration be considered at the System Council’s June 2020 meeting.
65. For future locations and dates of System Council meetings, it was noted that there have been several offers, and the proposal is as follows:
- a. **SC10:** 9-10 June 2020 in Berlin, Germany (linked to a high-profile SDG2 event)
  - b. **SC11:** November 2020 in One CGIAR Country/Region (to be determined)
  - c. **SC12:** May 2021 in Montpellier, France to kick-off to CGIAR@50
  - d. **SC13:** November 2021 (location to be determined) for CGIAR@50 (perhaps a

major high-level science policy focus partnership event)

66. For the CGIAR Science leadership/portfolio meeting in 2020, the meeting was advised that this would be held around the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Global Food Security taking place 16-18 June 2020 in Montpellier, France.
67. Additional information and suggestions around forthcoming System Council formal meetings included the following, with the System Council Secretary invited to continue exploration of these and other ideas and revert through the office of the System Council Chair in early 2020:
  - a. For SC11 in November 2020, the System Council meeting could perhaps be hosted by a country which hosts and partners with CGIAR as a system, with initial suggestions including Sudan, a country in South East Asia, or Morocco.
  - b. A consideration be given to holding a 'virtual System Council meeting' in the future recognizing the need to be conscious of the carbon footprint and noting that this would require being innovative about the format.
68. As a follow-up to the conversation on implementation of One CGIAR, the System Council Chair noted a proposal made for a workshop to be held in early 2020 to initiate work on the design of the research strategy in an open and transparent way. He welcomed efforts to move elements of One CGIAR forward, undertaken in a coordinated way amongst various groups.

*Bringing the meeting to a close*

69. In reflecting on the meeting, the Chair recognized the momentous and historic moment that the endorsement of the recommendations of the System Reference Group represents, pointing to what is needed for CGIAR to become fit for purpose for the next 50 years, in time for CGIAR's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. It is important all efforts should be taken to have the most profound impact at this forthcoming milestone, for CGIAR to clearly showcase its partnerships, a compelling narrative and value proposition, as well as its newly positioned operations.
70. He acknowledged that there will need to be more conversations on how to frame this journey in all the various contexts and in addressing any challenges. Noting that there is no illusion that the transition to operating as One CGIAR will be easy, the System Council Chair assured all CGIAR stakeholders that the System Council stands ready to support them on the journey and will contribute to the implementation as needed.
71. He stressed that the intention should not be for groups to withdraw and repackage the One CGIAR elements. Rather, to engage in co-creation moving forward so that there are no parallel processes. Instead, a collective movement towards One CGIAR.

72. The Chair also recognized the significant progress made in the areas of gender equality in both CGIAR's research and its workplaces since the last System Council meeting, and urged that it was crucial that efforts be redoubled.
73. The Chair thanked all members of the System Reference Group, the System Council's standing committees, the System Organization, and many others for the significant work throughout the year to bring key items to the System Council for its deliberation and decision-making.
74. The meeting was closed.

## Annex 1: List of meeting participants

<b>System Council Voting Members (listed alphabetically)</b>	<b>Member representative</b>	<b>Member Alternates &amp; Other Delegation Members</b>
AfDB	<b>Martin Fregene</b> (from Day 2 PM)	
Australia	<b>Andrew Campbell</b>	<b>Alternate Member - Mellissa Wood</b>
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	<b>Tony Cavalieri</b>	<b>Alternate Member - Enock Chikava</b>
Canada	<b>Stephen Potter</b>	
East Asia & Pacific (voting member China)	<b>Dandan Huang**</b>	
Germany & Belgium	<b>Sebastian Lesch**</b>	Other delegates- Michel Bernhardt
Japan	<b>Motoaki Komiya</b>	Other delegates- Miyuki Iiyama, Naoko Oka
Latin America and Caribbean (voting member Brazil)	<b>Pedro Machado (Brazil)</b>	
The Netherlands	<b>Wijnand van Ijssel</b>	Other delegates- Paul van de Logt
Norway	<b>Daniel van Gilst</b>	
South Asia	<b>Trilochan Mohapatra (India)</b>	<b>Alternate Member - Sisira Kumara (Sri Lanka)</b> Other delegates: A.R. Sengupta
Sub-Saharan Africa (voting member Nigeria)	<b>Yarama D. Ndirpaya (Nigeria)</b>	
Sweden	<b>Eva Ohlsson</b>	<b>Alternate Member - Philip Chiverton</b>
Switzerland	<b>Michel Evéquoz</b>	
United States of America	<b>Rob Bertram</b>	<b>Alternate Member - Eric Witte</b>
West Asia & North Africa (voting member Iran)	<b>Rasoul Zare (Iran)</b>	<b>Alternate Member - Ayfer Şahin (Turkey)</b> Other delegate - Merve Altan
The World Bank	<b>Mark Cackler</b>	<b>Alternate Member - Michael Morris</b>

<b>Non-voting Ex-officio members</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Other Delegation Members</b>
Chair, System Management Board	<b>Marco Ferroni</b>	
Executive Director, CGIAR System Organization	<b>Elwyn Grainger-Jones</b>	
Center Representative 1: Convener of the Chairs of Center Boards of Trustees	<b>Nicole Birrell</b>	
Center Representative 2: Convener of the Center Directors General	<b>Aly Abousabaa</b>	
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	<b>Hans Dreyer</b>	Selvaraju Ramasamy
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	<b>Paul Winters</b>	

<b>Active Observers</b>	<b>Representative</b>	<b>Alternate &amp; Other Delegates</b>
CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)	<b>Holger Meinke</b> (Chair)	

Invited attendees	Representative
CGIAR System Council's Assurance Oversight Committee	<b>Saad Bounjoua</b> (Chair)
CGIAR Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)	<b>Karen Macours</b> (Chair)
France - Host Country of CGIAR System Organization	<b>Frederic Lapeyrie</b> (Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation); Bernard Hubert (National Institute for Agricultural Research)
Trustee of the CGIAR Trust Fund	<b>Darius Stangu</b> (The World Bank)

Additional participants	
European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD)	Nathalie Oberson (Executive Secretary, EIARD)
Members of the CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) – selected sessions only	Lesley Torrance; Suneetha Kadiyala (Members)
World Bank	Jonathan Wadsworth, Lead Climate Change Specialist
CGIAR Advisory Services Shared Secretariat	Allison Grove Smith, Director
CGIAR System Organization <i>(variously, technical inputs for sessions; meeting management; logistics support)</i>	Karmen Bennett, System Council Secretary & Director, Board and Council Relations
	Jamie Craig, Director, Financial and Digital Services
	Sonja Vermeulen, Director, Programs
	André Zandstra, Director, Funder and External Engagement
	Kristina Roing de Nowina, Deputy Director, Funder and External Engagement
	Nadia Manning-Thomas, Board and Council Relations Manager
	Olwen Cussen, Senior Associate, Board and Council Relations
	Roland Sundstrom, Senior Advisor, Executive Director's Office
	Victoria Pezzi, Meetings and Events Associate
Madina Bazarova, Head, Internal Audit Function	

Connecting remotely	
Alan Tollervey - Day 1 and Day 2 PM	UK, System Council Voting Member
Elise Perset - Session 2 and 6	Director, Legal and Office Services, CGIAR System Organization

Session specific invitees	
Agenda Item 6	Claudia Sadoff, SMB Gender Champion

Apologies		
System Council Voting Members	Role	Name
European Commission	Member	Christophe Larose
Mexico	Member	Jorge Ruiz Rueda Souza
	Alternate	Miguel Narvaez
Active Observers	Role	Name
GFAR		Chair (or designate)