



**CO-CHAIRS' SUMMARY**  
**Fourth General Assembly of the Centers**  
Virtual, 5 August 2020, 14:00-16:00 Paris time

**Meeting Co-Chairs:**

- **Nicole Birrell**, Convener CGIAR Center Board of Trustees' Chairs
- **Gareth Johnstone**, Convener of CGIAR Center Directors General

**Purpose:**

This document serves as the formal record of proceedings at the 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Centers, held virtually on Wednesday 5 August 2020 at 14:00 Paris time.

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**Prepared by:** The Board and Council Relations Unit of the CGIAR System Organization under the direction of the Co-Chairs.

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## A. Summary of discussions

1. The Convener of the Board Chairs welcomed participants<sup>1</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of Centers ('GA'), noting that a number of ad hoc discussions of Board Chairs and Directors General have taken place in the intervening period since the 3<sup>rd</sup> GA meeting in January 2019, in addition to the extraordinary GA meeting in December 2019.
2. Framing the 4<sup>th</sup> GA, it was noted that Part One of the agenda provided an opportunity for general updates on ongoing key areas of work in implementing One CGIAR, turning to more specific upcoming One CGIAR governance considerations in Part Two. Reflecting feedback in advance of the meeting, 'other business' would include an update on financial and resource mobilization matters.

### Part 1 - General Updates

#### *Item 1: TAG 1 - Reflections on 28 July staff webinars*

3. The Convener of the Board Chairs highlighted the positive nature of the webinar experience, including strong participation with a high number of questions submitted in advance of and during the sessions. The strength of agreement with statements indicating good understanding of One CGIAR was noted as an encouraging sign and a signal to continue with similar Center staff outreach and engagement activities.
4. The Convener of the Directors General noted that the strongest area of interest from participants in the webinars was on institutional integration and shared services and expressed support for the taking forward of similar sessions led by the Executive Management Team ('EMT'), perhaps considering more regular and topic-specific sessions.
5. Reflections from General Assembly members included:
  - a. The need to balance the vision with the current reality in terms of financing and resource mobilization, being mindful of the pressures on staff across CGIAR Centers and being open and honest in messaging;
  - b. The value in staff hearing directly from the Transition Consultation Forum ('TCF') Co-Chairs and support for a platform to bring up questions that arise and, and provide timely answers to these as the process continues;
  - c. That the EMT, supported by the Transition Program Management Unit ('TMPU'), could consider how to include a form of 'live' interaction with staff in future sessions; and
  - d. That it would be helpful to understand the breadth of participation by Center<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer Annex 1

<sup>2</sup> Subsequent to the meeting, an approximate breakdown of participation by Center/Alliance affiliation was shared with the General Assembly by email.

*Item 2: TAG 2 – Progress Update*

6. Martin Kropff, co-convener of Transition Advisory Group-2 – Research ('TAG 2'), expressed appreciation for the work and dedication of the TAG 2 members and support teams and set out key elements of the Draft One CGIAR 2030 Research Strategy, highlighting that:
  - a. Delivery has been stewarded by TAG 2 through a highly inclusive process, drawing particularly on a meeting of CGIAR's Science Leaders in May 2020;
  - b. The draft strategy is intentionally high-level, with choices being made during its development to sharpen its focus, and it will provide the basis for development of Investment Plans for CGIAR Research;
  - c. The draft strategy proposes a refinement of CGIAR's mission and a clear formulation of a vision for 2030, and sets out 10 strategic directions to meet that mission and vision that align to what CGIAR can and should deliver;
  - d. In development, TAG 2 had taken inputs from Funders on priority countries, noting that these priorities vary between Funders; and
  - e. The draft would be shared after this meeting with the GA and the wider Transition Consultation Forum and CGIAR's Partners, with the TPMU to coordinate feedback over the coming weeks and continued development to be overseen by the EMT. GA members were encouraged to share their feedback on the draft at the earliest opportunity<sup>3</sup> and review the accompanying detailed attachments to inform that review.
7. The System Management Board ('SMB') Chair offered congratulations to the TAG 2 conveners and support team for the work undertaken to deliver such a high-quality draft strategy. Characterizing it as a historic and monumental contribution, he expressed appreciation for the way in which the inherent complexities in the work were managed by TAG 2.

*Item 3: TAG 5 – Progress update on country engagement concepts*

8. Juan-Lucas Restrepo, convener of Transition Advisory Group-5 - Country and Regional Engagement ('TAG 5'), recalled the 4-stage process of TAG 5's work and noted that the TAG is currently finalizing the second - 'Gather' - stage, synthesizing lessons learned from information, ideas and deep dives into internal and external engagement models undertaken over recent months. These inputs will inform the third or 'Design' phase, with a target delivery date of mid-September to develop a draft engagement model framing and lessons learnt, and hand this work to the EMT, with the EMT to lead work from September onwards, and through 2021 and 2022 to mature and stabilize the engagement model.

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<sup>3</sup> The draft was shared subsequent to the meeting, and feedback was requested, if possible, by 14 August 2020, with a deadline provided of Friday 28 August 2020.

9. The engagement channels established by TAG 5 were described, noting that these have provided a wide range of valuable inputs, with some channels, including a 'Practitioner pool' from within and external to CGIAR and a 'Partner sounding board', identified and ready to engage during the 'Design' phase under the leadership of the EMT.
10. The interdependent nature of the deliverables of TAG 5 with those of other TAGs was emphasized, as was the differences in various geographies. It was noted that progress had been made on a robust Theory of Change using triangulation principles from TAG 2. It was also clarified that TAG 5 has withheld from moving forward on elements that have organizational, financial or administrative implications, noting that these will be within the purview of the EMT, but has gathered significant evidence and suggestions relating to these to inform the EMT's decision-making in these areas.
11. As an additional reflection, the TAG 5 convener highlighted the need to understand how decisions on the shared agenda taken in One CGIAR will be modeled on and influenced by country and regional engagement and to what degree, to ensure that the strategies put in place can effectively support this.
12. In response to a question raised on how inputs from country and regional levels should be linked to the research strategy direction, it was noted that the EMT will take forward stakeholder consultation on the strategy, and that the list of 'sounding board' partners identified by TAG 5 may be a useful starting point in considering which stakeholders should be engaged with and how. It was highlighted that once the EMT is in place, the knowledge and background gathered by the work of the TAGs thus far will be an invaluable part of ongoing dialogue.

*Item 4: Transition Program Management Unit update*

13. Aly-Khan Jamal, Lead Program Director of the TPMU, provided an update on TPMU's key areas of focus and an update on progress since its commencement in early June 2020, specifically:
  - a. Development of a roadmap of activities and milestones;
  - b. Coordination of risk management activities;
  - c. Putting in place a Planning, Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation framework for the transition;
  - d. Establishing a communications office within the TPMU to support key outreach as part of a communications strategy;
  - e. Once the EMT is in place, supporting the work of the EMT to work with Center/Alliance leaders to develop proposals on institutional integration; and
  - f. Targeted support to TAGs and their workplans.
14. It was noted that good progress is being made on the timeline of deliverables, with thanks expressed to the TCF and support teams for the inputs and collaborations that have enabled this. The 1 September anticipated start date of the EMT was

highlighted as an adjustment to the date originally planned, with discussion ongoing on how workstreams will adjust to align with its commencement at that time.

15. The need for the cadence of communications to be increased, and sustained at that new regularity, to ensure success was noted. Center leadership was encouraged to reach out at the earliest opportunity for support with technical elements or host country engagement around unified governance. An example was provided of the type of support that the TPMU can provide around engagement with host countries.
16. A question was raised regarding Funder expectations on when clear investment plans will be available and possible additional key resource mobilization opportunities in advance of the 2021 UN Food Security Summit. It was noted that that the process for developing investment plans needs to be carefully considered to ensure that Funders have all the right information to make the case for CGIAR in their constituencies, while providing time to deliver robust and plausible plans that include stakeholder voices in their development.

*Item 5: Update on EMT appointments*

17. The SMB Chair recalled the General Assembly's 6 July 2020 decision to authorize the SMB to appoint the EMT.<sup>4</sup> He also acknowledged the work of TAG 3 in supporting the development of elements of the EMT Candidate Information Pack,<sup>5</sup> including an outline of the Terms of Reference for the EMT, as subsequently taken forward and approved by the SMB. The SMB Chair recalled milestones in the search and selection process, expressing appreciation for the work of the SMB's ad hoc Search Committee (chaired by Namanga Ngongi, with 7 members in total drawn from across the CGIAR System).
18. It was noted that the SMB voting members who do not serve as Center Directors General (with the latter having recused themselves from decision-making on this matter) convened on 24 and 28 July to deliberate on the ad hoc Search Committee's report, with a decision reached during the 28 July meeting. The SMB Chair confirmed that since that decision, discussions have been ongoing with the proposed appointees to formalize their appointment, with an announcement anticipated on Thursday 6 August<sup>6</sup>. The SMB Chair confirmed that the EMT will take up their roles on 1 September 2020.

**Part 2 – Governance-specific Updates**

*Item 6: Report back on decision on Center voting and reporting protocol*

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<sup>4</sup> Pursuant to Article 6.2 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization

<sup>5</sup> [https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2020/05/be5a95fc-cgiar\\_inaugural-emt-candidate-information-pack\\_15may2020.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2020/05/be5a95fc-cgiar_inaugural-emt-candidate-information-pack_15may2020.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> The announcement was made on 6 August as advised by the SMB Chair, and is accessible here: <https://www.cgiar.org/news-events/news/delivering-as-one-cgiar-inaugural-cgiar-executive-management-team-announced/>

19. The Convener of the Center Board Chairs confirmed that most Centers had expressed a preference that an open ballot should be held for electronic decision-making of the GA, with results of votes reported back to the GA.
20. She confirmed that this protocol had been enacted for the results of the recent decision to appoint the SMB and agree their compensation and will be used going forward.

*Item 7: TAG 3 progress update*

21. Hilary Wild, Convener of Transition Advisory Group 3 – Unified Governance ('TAG 3') and invited guest to this agenda item for the meeting, provided an update on work on key areas of unified governance and upcoming anticipated decision making to take that work forward. Key messages included:
  - a. An update on the status of issues raised by the GA during February 2020 voting, noting that of items relating to the introduction of a CGIAR common board, half have been addressed and half are in progress with specific updates to be provided on these during this meeting;
  - b. For other information needs, half of these have also already been addressed, with those remaining being taken forward in collaboration with TAG 2 or will be further developed by the EMT once in post;
  - c. That a checklist to guide amendments to Center governing instruments to implement a one CGIAR common board was developed with substantial valuable inputs from Center Board Secretaries and Legal Focal Points and from some DGs. Intended as a guide including essential as well as optional elements, it is already in use by many Centers, and has been sent to the SMB for endorsement;
  - d. Noting good progress reported by a majority of Centers thus far on legal and operational steps by Centers towards decisions required by 18 September 2020, Board Chairs and DGs were encouraged to ask their teams to help keep the TPMU's table on these steps updated, and where issues are identified by any Center, to seek support from the TPMU as soon as possible to ensure that these can be addressed;
  - e. That a working group of Board Secretaries, in consultation with the full Community of Practice and several Board Chairs, have developed a strong framework for a One CGIAR common secretariat which envisages a phased approach to ensure that key skills and knowledge are preserved and a global, diverse team is maintained to support the effective implementation of unified governance operations;
  - f. That work is in progress on a conflict of interest policy to clarify situations that may present as potential conflicts (as distinct from those situations where there is a duality of interests which are not in conflict), to help ensure that stakeholders are comfortable that there is integrity in decision making under unified governance for One CGIAR; and
  - g. That work on an approach to cross-System committees had revealed the extent and complexity of CGIAR's existing committees, with work now

focusing on development of an approach through a 'governance, risk and compliance' framework, with emphasis also on performance (the latter encompassing a range of areas including programs, finance, resource mobilizations and operations, with linkages to the MOPAN criteria being suggested to be explored). The anticipated timeline involves a phased approach to ensure that there is comfort that oversight roles are effectively transitioned and that it can be appropriately aligned to the One CGIAR research program structure as it is developed.

*Item 8: Centers' voting schedule and proposed next 'step' of amendments to Charter*

22. Karmen Bennett, serving as secretariat support to the GA, recalled that a 'step-wise approach' to amendments to the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization to bring into effect Unified Governance under One CGIAR had been agreed by the System Management Board at its 16th meeting in January 2020, building on feedback from the December 2019 extraordinary GA. The premise of the 'step-wise' approach is to take decisions when needed, with the added advantage of giving time in between decision making to advance One CGIAR.
23. Speaking to the slide presented for this GA meeting, it was noted that the amendments to the Charter proposed at this 2<sup>nd</sup> "step" bring in elements including a definition of the EMT, amending the name of the System Management Board to System Board following feedback from TAG 3 and other stakeholders, separating the System-facing and System Organization internal roles of the Board of the System Organization, and adjusting the quorum rules for the Board from 1 September 2020 to reflect the change in composition.
24. In response to a question raised, it was confirmed that the 'Definitions' section would be carefully reviewed to ensure that these align with the proposed amendments, and confusion is avoided with the "CGIAR System" as relevant.
25. It was also confirmed that the 3<sup>rd</sup> "step" on clarifying the role of the Executive Director of the CGIAR System Organization (as set out at the bottom of the slide presented) could possibly take place following announcement by the SMB of its appointment of the EMT, as that may help to take this forward now. A 4<sup>th</sup> "step" of changes to the Charter would also be required in late September, early October, with the timing of those changes to be discussed with the GA co-conveners and EMT.
26. **Action Point GA/M4/AP1**: A draft of the proposed changes to the Charter will be shared with CGIAR's Legal Focal Points for review and inputs by 10 August, in advance of a request for approval of this "step" of changes being issued concurrently to the General Assembly, SMB and System Council for approval on 17 August 2020.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Center Legal Focal Points received an annotated set of possible amendments on Monday 10 August 2020, with observations on that drafting kindly requested by end of day on Friday 14 August.

27. Appreciation was expressed to Center colleagues, particularly Board Secretaries and Legal Focal points, for their in-depth work on many areas to advance the work on unified governance.

### **Part 3 – Other business**

#### *Item 10 - Update on financial projections for 2020 and resource mobilization update*

28. As a requested item of other business, an update was provided to the GA on financial projections and resource mobilization activities for 2020 and beyond, particularly focusing on the impact of COVID-19.
29. A presentation was provided by the System Organization's Director, Financial and Digital Services, with it being noted that updated data continues to become available from Centers. Since the previous update in June 2020, the aggregated data shows that deficits are anticipated in all but one Center, however the latest projections<sup>8</sup> indicate that overall revenue expectations are increasing, and the projected deficits are decreasing. With the item having been added as 'other business', and it having not been possible to share the draft prior to the meeting, it was confirmed that 'Diligent Boards' for the Center Board Chairs and DGs would be updated immediately following the meeting with the full presentation deck.
30. An update was also provided on planned CGIAR resource mobilization, communication and advocacy activities and the draft strategy<sup>9</sup> by the System Organization's Director, Funder and External Engagement. Information on COVID-19 risks and opportunities relating to ODA commitments and their potential impact on CGIAR funding for 2020-21 was also shared, noting that the situation continues to evolve and be monitored closely.
31. The value of sharing such information with Board Chairs as well as DGs (as is typically done during DGs' monthly calls) was echoed, with all Centers encouraged to share as much data as possible to ensure that dashboards reflect the most up to date situation.

#### *Item 9 – Next and final meeting of the General Assembly*

32. It was proposed that the General Assembly come together in late-September for one final meeting as the GA as currently operational, with the suggestion that the group be joined by the then reconstituted 'System Board' members, the TCF Co-Chairs, and EMT as a moment of reflection and celebration of the progress thus far and a handover for those whose roles may not continue beyond 1 October.

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<sup>8</sup> Noting that three Centers had not had the opportunity to communicate revised projections at the time of the meeting.

<sup>9</sup> The draft One CGIAR Resource Mobilization, Communication and Advocacy Strategy, developed by TAG 7, was made available on Diligent Boards immediately following the meeting.



33. The GA Co-Conveners suggested that this session would also be an opportunity to consider an idea for a 'CGIAR Alumni' group for CGIAR's board members who would not be continuing as voting members, and how that might be set up and supported (noting that a network approach requires resourcing to be successful).

*Meeting close*

34. A reflection was shared that although appreciative of the breadth of information provided, additional opportunities for dialogue amongst GA participants could be considered (supported by an agenda with fewer items), acknowledging also the challenges of the virtual format in this regard.
35. The Co-Conveners thanked colleagues for their continued engagement and closed the meeting.

Annex 1: Attendees of the 4<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

\*Center Board Chairs Convener, \*\* Center DGs Convener, \*\*\* GA Member Designate

Center	Names	Position
AfricaRice	Carol Kramer-LeBlanc	Board of Trustees Chair
	Harold Roy-Macauley	Director General
Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT	Julia Marton-Lefèvre	Board of Trustees Chair
	Juan Lucas Restrepo	Director General
CIFOR-ICRAF	Claire O'Connor	CIFOR-ICRAF Common Board of Trustees Chair
	Robert Nasi	Director General, CIFOR
CIMMYT	Nicole Birrell*	Board of Trustees Chair
	Martin Kropff	Director General
CIP	Barbara Wells	Director General
ICARDA	Ruth Haug***	Board of Trustees Vice-Chair
	Aly Abousabaa	Director General
ICRISAT	Paco Sereme	Governing Board Chair
	Jackie Hughes	Director General
IFPRI	Emorn Udomkesmalee	Board of Trustees Chair
	Jo Swinnen	Director General
IITA	Christian Borgemeister	Board of Trustees Chair
	Nteranya Sanginga	Director General
ILRI	Lindsay Falvey	Board of Trustees Chair
	Jimmy Smith	Director General
IRRI	Jim Godfrey	Board of Trustees Chair
	Matthew Morell	Director General
IWMI	Roberto Lenton	Board of Governors Chair
	Claudia Sadoff	Director General
WorldFish	Baba Yusuf Abubakar	Board of Trustees Chair
	Gareth Johnstone**	Director General

## Apologies

Center	Name	Position	Represented by
CIP	Rodney Cooke	Board Chair	
ICARDA	Michel Afram	Board Chair	Ruth Haug, Board of Trustees Vice-Chair

## Invited Guests and speakers

Marco Ferroni	TCF Co-Chair; System Management Board Chair
Tony Cavalieri	TCF Co-Chair; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Hilary Wild	TAG 3 Convener
Aly-Khan Jamal	Dalberg team (TPMU update)
Elwyn Grainger-Jones	Executive Director, CGIAR System Organization
Karmen Bennett	Director, Board and Council Relations, CGIAR System Organization

**Invited Observers**

Andrea Nour	ICARDA Legal Counsel and Board Secretary
Daphne Voorips	CIMMYT Policy Framework Coordinator and Board Secretary
Helen Thompson	Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT Board Secretary
Hilde Koper-Limbourg	IITA Incoming Board Secretary
Jenny Cramer	IITA Board Secretary
Marcel Nwalozie	AfricaRice Chief of Staff & Secretary to the Board of Trustees
Renei Tan	ICRISAT Governing Board Secretary
Romeo Recide	IRRI Board Secretary
Selim Guvener	CIP General Counsel and Board Secretary
Shirley Tarawali	ILRI Assistant Director General and Board Secretary
Stacy Roberts	IFPRI Head of Institutional Relations and Secretary to the Board of Trustees
Jake Maughan	Dalberg Team
Andre Zandstra	Director, Funder and External Engagement, CGIAR System Organization
Elise Perset	Director, Legal and Office Services, CGIAR System Organization
Jamie Craig	Director, Finance and Digital Services, CGIAR System Organization
Sonja Vermeulen	Director, Programs, CGIAR System Organization
Roland Sundstrom	Senior Advisor, CGIAR System Organization

**Meeting support**

Olwen Cussen	Board and Council Relations Officer, CGIAR System Organization
Victoria Pezzi	Meetings and Events Coordinator, CGIAR System Organization