

Chair's Summary¹

19th CGIAR System Board Meeting 28 & 29 January 2021; Virtual

Colleagues,

At the conclusion of the Board's 19th meeting I expressed pride in how CGIAR's staff, leadership, and valued partners are building One CGIAR in the spirit of what was agreed in Chengdu in November 2019. Progress since then has been significant, the more so for being undertaken in a challenging global context.

Against that background, it is incumbent on the System Board to consider key trade-offs arising from our decisions as we continue to provide thoughtful stewardship of One CGIAR implementation. The Board's capacity to rise to this challenge was evidenced in the rich discussions that informed our approval of a new **One CGIAR integrated operational structure** to serve as a powerful enabling environment for all of CGIAR's talent to come together and deliver collectively on our bold [2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#).

That approval represents the culmination of tireless work of so many across CGIAR over three years since the commencement of the System Reference Group following the May 2018 System Council meeting. Many interim milestones have been achieved since then, including: One CGIAR Unified Governance taking effect for most of CGIAR's Centers, with deep appreciation to the thoughtful deliberations of CGIAR's board members; the appointment of the inaugural Executive Management Team from September 2020; and November's approval of the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy. We now have a line of sight on how CGIAR's management and staff can deliver on our vision of a truly integrated CGIAR. I convey the System Board's sincere appreciation and congratulations to all those across CGIAR whose work has led us to this moment.

Other key elements of our SB19 deliberations included:

- The Board being updated on the process of development of the 2022-2024 Investment Plan and Initiatives. The Board fully supported the co-creation approach envisaged through the inaugural Investment Advisory Groups, as well as adoption of pragmatic mechanisms to ensure that quality is not compromised in meeting the unavoidable demanding timescales in 2021.
- Rich discussions on the essential element of ensuring that the financial resources provided to CGIAR meet the goal of US\$1+ billion in pooled funding for the 2022-2024 Investment Plan cycle. The Board will continue to oversee this closely and engage actively in strategic resource mobilization support.

¹ Prepared pursuant to Article 9.2 of the [Rules of Procedure](#) of the CGIAR System Board.

The following pages record the decisions of the Board and summary points from our conversations.

Colleagues, this moment is the 'end of the beginning'. It promises to be a time of exciting change and transition which will require careful management to deliver on our existing commitments while designing CGIAR's 2022-2024 Investment Plan and Initiatives for the future. The task now at hand is to align our teams and our work around the One CGIAR operational structure and to define and live a set of One CGIAR values and a shared culture that all of us are proud to be a part of.

Sincerely
Marco Ferroni
Chair, CGIAR System Board

Meeting Summary

1. The Chair welcomed participants to the meeting. A quorum was present. Noting the Board's commitment to ensuring transparency in the topics that the Board has before it, the Chair sought and received agreement from attendees for the Board to take agenda items 3b. and 3c in closed session, with confirmation that should final decisions be taken on those items, a record of the decisions would be provided in the meeting summary.²

Decision: SB/M19/DP1: The CGIAR System Board adopted the Agenda (as set out in meeting document SB19-01, Revision 1, issued on 28 January 2021).

2. The Secretary referred to the declarations of interest made on the agenda and noted that the standing register is available on Diligent Boards. Participants were reminded of their obligations under CGIAR's Code of Conduct for Governance Officials³ including their continued responsibility to draw any actual or potential perceived conflict to the attention of the Chair should one arise during discussions.

A. Agenda Item 2 – Development of 2022-24 Investment Plan and CGIAR Initiatives

Key discussion areas

3. The Managing Director, Research Delivery and Impact and Convener of the CGIAR Executive Management Team ('EMT') provided an overview of material set out in meeting document SB19-02, noting that:
 - a. The 2022-24 Investment Plan and CGIAR Initiatives are anticipated to be presented for endorsement at a virtual CGIAR System Board meeting in May 2021 and for approval at a virtual System Council meeting in June 2021;
 - b. The 2022-24 Investment Plan will be a compilation of approximately three dozen prospectuses of large-scale CGIAR initiatives, five to ten of which would be fast-tracked, moving directly from pre-concept agreement to a full proposal to launch from 1 January 2022, with others being added on a rolling basis as they are developed;
 - c. As a first step toward the investment plans, Investment Advisory Groups ('IAGs') were being established, with an electronic decision issued on the date of this Board meeting to the System Council for approval of their proposed composition; and

² Article 4.3, System Board Rules of Procedure <https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2020/11/System-Board-Rules-of-Procedure-Approved3Nov2020.pdf>

³ Available at <https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2020/11/CGIAR-Code-of-Conduct-Gov-Officials-Approved-03.11.20.pdf>

- d. The membership of the IAGs has benefitted from rich inputs from CGIAR Funders and stakeholders, with additional time required to ensure comfort with the process among stakeholders.
4. It was noted that the additional time taken to form the IAGs has resulted in a more compressed timetable for development of the proposals themselves than originally planned. A consequence of this, is that to ensure a seamless transition from the current portfolio to a new one from January 2022, the amount of detail in the initial prospectus will be necessarily less than originally anticipated, while not compromising the quality of the final proposals. Additional detail in terms of ex-ante explanations of benefits and ex-ante work would be completed before full proposals were presented.
 5. In discussions that followed, it was recognized that:
 - a. Greater detail in prospectuses would be an enabler for more effective resource mobilization for the full 2022-24 Investment Plan. Assurance was provided that a compelling set of fast-track programs will support these efforts during 2021 while the full Investment Plan is developed;
 - b. The emphasis on fast-track initiatives represents a solid contribution to the change management plan to operate as One CGIAR. Appreciation was expressed for the suggestion of putting the demand of the regions together with the supply of the funding as a powerful way to speak with governments to emphasize opportunities for growth at country level; and
 - c. From the perspective of CGIAR's Independent Science for Development Council ('ISDC'), there is comfort with the process proposed and the commitment to bring in external voices and lessons from past evaluations, with acknowledgement of the time pressures involved.

Session outcome

6. In summarizing, the Chair noted the Board's support for the proposed direction of the development of the investment plan and the need for ongoing adaptive management in the process.

B. Agenda Item 3 – Moving to a One CGIAR Integrated Operational Structure

Key discussion areas

7. Building on framing by the EMT's Managing Director, Institutional Strategy and Systems, the Board reflected on the proposed One CGIAR integrated operational structure (set out in meeting document SB19-03). The significant consultations and design contributions from across CGIAR, including through Design Working Groups drawing on specialist talent throughout CGIAR, was commended.

8. It was highlighted that the vision of the destination, where form follows function to deliver on the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy was now clear, with the proposed structure delivering deep integration across the interconnected challenges, alignment of authority, accountability and responsibility for all that we do, and maximizing the opportunities for efficiency gains.
9. The following key themes were raised in discussions:
 - a. Reiteration of the importance of increasing the visibility and frequency of actions being undertaken to build a common culture, with a suggestion made to include specific milestones and deliverables on culture and communication, mindful of the impact of uncertainty during change on CGIAR's people. The need to embed diversity and inclusion in CGIAR's new culture was noted;
 - b. Appreciation for the exploration of key implementation risks and associated mitigations in the material, building on previous inputs provided by the Board and other stakeholders, with a suggestion made to further develop these in evolving transition plans;
 - c. Channels to bring in expertise from senior science leaders on what opportunities should be explored, as well as mechanisms to do so, should be well defined;
 - d. Acknowledgement of the shift in thinking that had been observed right across CGIAR seen during the extensive consultations on what is possible to make One CGIAR a reality, with a question raised on how the Board could further support communication efforts as the transition progresses; and
 - e. A recommendation that more analysis be included on how to ensure and monitor sufficient pooled and bilateral funding during the transition, including on managing risks, demonstrating progress, ensuring visibility of the pipeline, and analyzing shortfalls.
10. In response to questions raised, the EMT confirmed the intent to move quickly on leadership level appointments as soon as possible as a pivotal step, alongside steps to clarify to staff where their roles align in the new One CGIAR reporting structure – noting that this was not change that was happening 'tomorrow'. Rather, change would be progressively implemented across 2021, to be ready for a new CGIAR structure from 1 January 2022. It was also confirmed that to ensure delivery on existing bilateral project commitments during 2021, it is expected that core project management teams will remain intact for much of 2021, with their integration into the new structure being carefully managed.

Session outcome

11. The Chair thanked the Board for its support and the detailed inputs provided, noting that these would be invaluable to the EMT in refining the presentation of the structure

to the System Council in its March 2021 virtual meeting and on priorities for more detailed transition planning updates to the Board.

Decision SB/M19/DP2: The System Board:

- i. **Approved** the One CGIAR operational structure as presented by the EMT at SB19, taking note that the principles of adaptive management may result in changes to nomenclature of sub-functions within global groups; the location and structure of cross-cutting functions; and interfaces between different groups; and
- ii. **Delegated** to the System Board Chair authority to clear the final paper for submission to the System Council for and on behalf of the System Board and EMT, taking into account inputs provided during SB19, and revisions made for clarity of message.

C. Agenda Item 4 – Operating under Unified Governance

Key discussion areas

12. The Secretary provided an overview of progress on implementation of One CGIAR Unified Governance, recalling that the target date for putting in place common board membership in CGIAR was 1 October 2020. It was confirmed that most Centers and Alliances had been able to take relevant decisions by end-2020, some adopting variations on the Board-endorsed checklist that was developed by Transition Advisory Group 3. It was noted that the CGIAR System Internal Audit Function will undertake a validation exercise to ensure that the overview of implementation status is an accurate reflection of the details in Centers' governing instruments and identify any areas where refinement would be advised to better serve aligned governance delivery.
13. It was acknowledged that 2021 will be a transitional year as One CGIAR Unified Governance settles in. It was highlighted that a focus will be on the committee structure supporting CGIAR's boards, with opportunities for discussions on how current and future oversight needs can best be served.
14. The Board also reflected on the forward-looking approach to continue to embed One CGIAR in system-wide governing instruments, as set out in meeting document SB19-04b. It was confirmed that this was an information point for now, that this would also be briefly discussed with the System Council at its forthcoming meeting to triangulate data, and that forthcoming decisions (end-Q2 2021) would be informed by a cross-CGIAR working group on the proposed changes. The Secretary noted that the suggested next steps aligned with the 'step-wise' approach approved by the then-titled System Management Board in January 2020.

Session outcome

15. The Board expressed its support for the approach proposed.

D. Agenda Item 5 – Resource Mobilization, Communications and Advocacy – taking forward key action areas

Key discussion areas

16. The Board reflected on a comprehensive update from the EMT's Managing Director, Global Engagement and Innovation, on resource mobilization targets and the strategy to achieve these.
17. Highlights included examples of elevation of CGIAR in the media and in global conversations around food systems, particularly through the launch of the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy. The update also explored progress against funding targets and risks and associated mitigation strategies, as well as diversification of funding with several avenues currently being explored.
18. The following themes arose during the Board's discussions:
 - a. Recognition of the value of the Design Working Groups process in bringing new thinking and ideas to the fore including on specific resource mobilization expertise needed, and that those discussions should continue to further develop interfaces and professional alignment among staff in this area under One CGIAR;
 - b. Encouragement to further explore sources of climate funding and maximize networks and connections to these including through the System Council members;
 - c. That additional contextual detail on fundraising milestones and targets would be helpful for the Board to set realistic expectations and EMT performance indicators;
 - d. The importance not only of compelling investment plans for future research, but also of strong evidence and success stories of results achieved with funding already delivered, in securing continued and increased funding; and
 - e. That additional guidance on champion roles that Board members have agreed to play and more regular digests of CGIAR media items and success stories would be valuable to deliver practical support.

Session outcome

Action Point SB/M19/AP1: An additional briefing document will be provided to the Board by mid-March 2021, setting out additional detail on the areas raised.

E. Agenda Item 6 – Operational matters

Key discussion areas

19. The Managing Director, Institutional Strategy and Systems, introduced advance materials on the System Organization's delivery against the 2020 workplan (document SB19-06a), an interim succession planning approach for staff in key System Organization roles (document SB19-06b) and an update on Covid-19 impacts across CGIAR (document SB19-06c).
20. Before commencing discussions, the Chair led the Board in a moment of reflection in memory of those CGIAR staff lost to COVID-19, and recognized the significant efforts being made across CGIAR to keep staff, their families and partners as safe as possible.
21. On the System Organization 2020 workplan, a suggestion was made to focus future workplans on a smaller number of more strategic KPIs, and link these to budget expenditure to better map and track achievements.

Session outcome

Decision SB/M19/DP3: The System Board approved the interim succession planning approach to managing risks associated with the unexpected departure or sudden unavailability of staff in key System Organization roles, with the intention of adopting a whole of CGIAR approach to succession planning as part of the move to One CGIAR common policies.

F. Agenda Item 7 – System Board 2021 Planning

Key discussion areas

22. The Deputy Director, Board and Council Relations, introduced an approach to planning for CGIAR governance meetings in 2021 (set out in meeting document SB19-07), developed in consultation with colleagues from the One CGIAR common secretariat group.
23. Mindful of the ongoing work to embed unified governance, including on common committees and delegations of authority to be taken forward by the CGIAR Audit Committee Chairs group in the first half of the year, a more coordinated approach to Center/Alliance board meeting sessions is proposed for Q2 2021 which includes existing audit committees remaining in place for the review of 2020 annual financial statements of each legal entity.

Session outcome

24. The Board expressed support for the approach proposed and asked that the One CGIAR common secretariat team proceed with planning on that basis.

G. Agenda Item 8 – Closed session

25. All System Board members, and on the decision of the Chair pursuant to Article 9.9 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the Executive Management Team, the System Board Secretary and the System Organization General Counsel participated in the closed (executive) session of the System Board. Operational members of the System Board Secretariat were also in attendance. As agreed at the opening of the meeting, the Board's Active Observers and invited guests did not participate in this session.
26. No decisions were taken in the closed session that have a material impact on the CGIAR System, with the Board agreeing on selected steps and decisions to be taken, and thereafter brought back to the Board for information or confirmation as appropriate.
27. The Chair thanked Board members and closed the meeting.

Appendix: List of participants

Members

Voting members	
Marco Ferroni (Chair)	Neal Gutterson
Alice Ruhweza	Patrick Caron
Alyssa Jade McDonald-Baertl	Shenggen Fan
Hilary Wild	<i>One current vacancy</i>
Ex-officio non-voting members	
Clarissa van Heerden	Independent Chair, Audit & Risk Committee
Elwyn Grainger-Jones	Managing Director, Institutional Strategy and Systems in capacity as Executive Director, CGIAR System Organization

Active observers pursuant to Article 7.8 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization

Claudia Sadoff	Executive Management Team Convener and Managing Director, Research Delivery and Impact
Kundhavi Kadiresan	Managing Director, Global Engagement and Innovation
Stephen Potter (Canada)	Representative of System Council Voting Members
Wijnand van Ijssel (The Netherlands)	Representative of System Council Voting Members
Frank Place	Research program leader from the CGIAR Portfolio
Holger Meinke	Chair, CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council

System Board Secretary

Karmen Bennett	Director, Board and Council Relations, CGIAR System Organization
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Invited Guests pursuant to Article 7.9 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization

Allison Smith	Director CGIAR System Advisory Services Shared Secretariat
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Content experts

Elise Perset	System Organization General Counsel, and Director, Legal and Office Services
Jamie Craig	Director, Financial and Digital Services, CGIAR System Organization
Sonja Vermeulen	Director, Programs, CGIAR System Organization
André Zandstra	Director, Funder and External Engagement, CGIAR System Organization
Madina Bazarova	Head, CGIAR System Internal Audit Function
Christine Larson-Luhila	Deputy Director, Board and Council Relations
Yorgos Solomos	Senior Advisor, Risk Management, CGIAR System Organization
Roland Sundstrom	Senior Advisor, Executive Director's Office, CGIAR System Organization
Wijnand de Wit (Agenda Item 3 only)	Operational Program Director, Transition Program Management Unit

Operational support

Olwen Cussen	Board and Council Relations Officer, CGIAR System Organization
Thomas Marius Müller	Meetings & Events Coordinator, CGIAR System Organization