

*Communiqué to all CGIAR staff, all One CGIAR Board and System Council and Committee members*

## **Reflections from the CGIAR System Board Retreat**

The System Board met over the weekend of 26-27 March 2022 – the first occasion for us to meet in person since our August 2020 appointment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The world today is at an inflection point. The many threats facing our fragile food, land, and water systems – ranging from climate change to biodiversity loss, conflict, and the pandemic – have brought mankind to the brink of a crisis with resounding potential impacts on food security, health, and nutrition on every continent. This will affect those that CGIAR seeks to constantly listen to and serve. Such challenges require integrated solutions – which an integrated One CGIAR is poised to deliver.

Our retreat covered a wide range of topics – learning from each other how best to ensure the completion of the One CGIAR process and using our collective experience to support our staff and partners in our common endeavor. One CGIAR can provide solutions now and for the future in ways that were never previously possible.

The System Board is steadfast in championing the trajectory of One CGIAR and guiding our executive leadership as we move forward. Our mission requires One CGIAR; the global challenges of our time demand it. We noted and welcomed the unwavering commitment of the System Council to One CGIAR as the only way forward. With this joint ownership – and supported by the vision of our many Board members across all One CGIAR Centers and the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT – our role as a System Board is to oversee the transition through clear and purposeful decision-making, adapting where required to solve problems and keep us on course.

We reflected on our collective achievements along the journey to One CGIAR – including a research agenda to rise to the challenges of our era that is now being implemented through a coherent and interconnected 2022-2024 Investment Prospectus. We considered the mission-critical role of Centers and their Host Countries in One CGIAR, without hesitating on the commitment to unified governance and an integrated operational structure. We acknowledged our staff's exceptional commitment and contributions at a time of transition. We wish to record our gratitude to all of them, as well as the EMT, the Directors General, the Global, Regional and Senior Directors, and the Senior Leadership Team as a team for the constructive ways in which they demonstrate every day that they are positive agents of change in taking One CGIAR forward.

We acknowledged that CGIAR is fundamentally rooted in partnership. A demand-driven approach is central to our 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, which was shaped by two rounds of regional consultation. We recognized the immense value the diverse range of voices from the global South brought to this process and other decision-making instances in the One CGIAR transition.

We were at the same time conscious of the need to step up our engagement with partners, shifting into listening mode and working to achieve much greater ‘voice’ and representation of the global South in One CGIAR, along with expanded science and innovation partnerships leveraging talent from the global South. We will immediately launch a high-level Advisory Panel to bring together representatives from across regions and national agricultural research systems, government ministries, universities, and the private sector to support us on this.

The Advisory Panel will be invited to review and build on CGIAR’s [Engagement Framework for Partnerships & Advocacy – Toward Greater Impact](#), which sets out proposed guiding principles, systems, and approaches for partners and CGIAR to keep in mind as we pursue shared goals. The Panel will advise on strategies and approaches to strengthen national and regional research capacity, catalyze partnerships in agriculture and food systems research in countries of the global South, and safeguard the custodianship and use of public goods such as knowledge, biological materials, and research outcomes. We are determined to act on the opportunity for transformational change in CGIAR’s country and regional engagement. We know that our Funders are similarly committed to broader inclusion of partner voices and have expressed strong support for the System Council to consider ways to increase the participation and visibility of partner countries among its membership.

As System Board members, we are also voting members of the Boards of all One CGIAR Centers and the Alliance. We discussed and acknowledged our responsibility to ensure that these legal entities’ constitutions, host country agreements and applicable contracts and laws are respected within the integrated One CGIAR governance framework. We reflected on our partnership and cooperation with the Board Chairs (through the Board Chairs’ Network) and the full membership of Center/Alliance Boards and wish to express our gratitude to them for their commitment and enabling contributions to the transition to One CGIAR.

We also discussed and acknowledged our role in defending the standards of conduct that define who we are as CGIAR. We reaffirmed our commitment to CGIAR’s shared [Ethical Values and the Code of Conduct for Governance Officials](#) and will ensure that mutual respect is the hallmark of all interactions.

At a time of change, transparency and clarity on decision-making and progress are key. To complement our executive leadership’s ongoing communications strategy, we commit to provide regular progress updates on our priorities, activities, and decisions to all stakeholders. We are united and optimistic on the future of One CGIAR as part of the solution to the challenges of our time and at the Retreat reaffirmed our commitment to delivering it.

The reality of the inflection point referred to above calls on all of us to evolve CGIAR to harness science, innovation, partnerships, and talent for the systems-transformational impact for people and the planet that our mission statement demands (‘food, land, and water systems transformation in a climate crisis’). We commend and thank our staff and all partners for their passion and drive that has brought us to this point and look forward to working together as we implement One CGIAR.

#### CGIAR System Board Voting Members

*Marco Ferroni (Chair), Alice Ruhweza, Alyssa Jade McDonald-Baertl, Hilary Wild, Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, Neal Gutterson, Patrick Caron, Shenggen Fan*

\* *Clarissa van Heerden, System Board non-voting member and independent Chair of CGIAR’s Audit, Finance & Risk Committee also attended the retreat*