

Meeting Summary 17th System Council Meeting 2-3 November 2022

Purpose:

This document presents the formal meeting summary for the System Council's 17th meeting ('SC17'), as approved by the System Council on a no objection basis with effect from 8 February 2023 (Decision Reference SC/M17/EDP3).

It supplements the [SC17 Chair's Summary](#) (issued 6 November 2022) that confirmed decisions taken and actions agreed during the meeting.

Distribution notice: This document may be distributed without restriction.

Prepared by: System Council Secretariat

Introduction

This document presents a summary of the 17th meeting of the System Council (“Council”) held on 2-3 November 2022 in Brisbane, Australia. It follows after the release of the SC17 Chair’s Summary (6 November), that was issued with the [Brisbane Moment](#) communication – agreed under item 14.a of the System Council agenda.

By way of overview:

Format: The meeting was largely held as an in-person meeting, with some virtual participation over two consecutive working days: Wednesday, 2 November and Thursday, 3 November 2022.

Agenda items: The meeting covered agenda items within fourteen (14) sessions set out in the table of contents on the following page.

Decisions: The Council took eight (8) decisions and agreed on three (3) action points during its meeting as initially recorded in the SC17 Chair’s Summary and reproduced in sequence in this summary.

Participants: [Annex 1](#) sets out a list of meeting participants.

Basis of preparation: Pursuant to Article 9.2(a) of the [System Council Rules of Procedure](#), the Secretariat shall not produce a verbatim record of proceedings. The following document therefore neither attributes interventions, nor reproduces direct quotes of an individual System Council member, Active Observer, or other invited guest.

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Agenda Item 1: Meeting Opening

1. The System Council's non-voting Chair, Juergen Voegelé, opened the meeting. A quorum was present.
2. The Chair welcomed new Council voting members, alternates, and participants¹, attending in person and online, including
 - a. South Asia (India): Himanshu Pathak, voting member
 - b. East Asia & Pacific (Indonesia): Fadjry Diufry, alternate member
 - c. West Asia & North Africa (Iran): Tooraj Valinassab, alternate member
 - d. Netherlands: Timmo Gaasbeek, alternate member (online)
3. The Chair also welcomed additional representatives of the System Board ('Board') and external experts from CGIAR's Independent Science for Development Council ('ISDC'), CGIAR's Standing Panel on Impact Assessment ('SPIA'), and team members from CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service ('IAES').
4. **Decision SC/M17/DP1: Appointment of Meeting Co-Chair**
The Council **appointed** Andrew Campbell, a Council member representing Australia as the non-voting Co-Chair for the 17th System Council meeting, pursuant to Article 5.2 of the CGIAR System Framework.
5. The Co-Chair expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve in the role and noted that Julianne Biddle would serve as the Voting Member for the Australia constituency during the meeting's proceedings.
6. The Chair then offered several overall framing remarks for the meeting, describing this as a pivotal moment for the world, with the stalling of decades of progress in poverty reduction and economic growth with hundreds of millions of people displaced and even more unable to afford food. He stated that in the face of these challenges, CGIAR's global footprint that is focused on global public goods is greatly needed to drive the transformation of food, land, and water systems amidst these global challenges.
7. Formally tabling the provisional agenda, the Chair made note of the Secretariat's communication on the eve of the meeting, sharing the re-ordering of several items, adding an additional item 14a, and making space for some voices of the scientists. No declarations of interest were made on the agenda, and no items of other business were requested. The Chair confirmed that he would be flexible if additional areas arose during the meeting.
8. **Decision SC/M17/DP2: Adoption of the Agenda**
The System Council adopted the Agenda, as re-issued on 2nd November 2022 with revised timings and an additional item 14a titled 'Capturing our messaging'.²

¹ Composition: <https://www.cgiar.org/how-we-work/governance/system-council/sc-composition/>

² The agenda was adopted pursuant to Article 7.2(a) of the [System Council Rules of Procedure](#)

Agenda Item 2: One CGIAR — Our Progress on the Journey

9. The Board Chair in his role as a non-voting member of the System Council provided framing remarks for the session.
10. Before commencing, the Board Chair conveyed a warm welcome to the guest Board members present, [Lindiwe Majele Sibanda](#) and [Alyssa-Jade McDonald-Baertl](#), and to [Elsa Murano](#) on-line, who serves as the 2022 Co-Convener of the Board Chairs Network, together with the Board Chair, and therefore one of the 2022 non-voting member Center representatives on the System Council.
11. The Board Chair's framing remarks underscored that the transition path agreed by the System Council at its November 2019 Chengdu meeting has not always been smooth, observing that institutional change is never easy. He emphasized the importance of accelerating the completion of the One CGIAR transition, as envisioned by the [CGIAR 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy](#) to move beyond incremental progress to achieve bold, cooperative action in the [five \(5\) thematic areas carefully crafted](#) by CGIAR's [System Reference Group](#) ('SRG') and unanimously adopted by CGIAR's Council in Chengdu nearly three years ago.
12. He praised the tremendous progress made to date, including: i) significant increases to pooled funding of CGIAR's Initiatives; ii) CGIAR's amplified and broadening global visibility; iii) CGIAR's extensive embedding of gender, diversity and inclusion and ethical business practices across all CGIAR workplaces; and iv) working with our partners as never before to deliver impact where it is needed most.
13. He reflected the consensus of the Board that the time to complete the transition to the One CGIAR is overdue and that the Board is looking forward to completing the transition reforms and turning its focus to the major, prioritized areas of investment of the [portfolio of CGIAR Research Initiatives](#) ('Initiatives') and achieving impact aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, including the six (6) Regional Integrated Initiatives co-created with key partners throughout the innovation process.
14. With this in mind, the Board Chair focused on four (4) key areas that require resolution, emphasizing the Council's critical role in stewarding considerable progress in each:
 - a. During ongoing bilateral engagements, strongly advocate to Center Boards to sign the CGIAR Integration Framework Agreement ('IFA') by the end of the 2022 calendar year to ensure that CGIAR staff across the globe are confident about the pathway forward;
 - b. Advocate for new and increased pooled funding in support of CGIAR's Global and Regional Integrated Initiatives — noting that a large share of Funder investments for CGIAR research and innovation remains un-pooled, and thus directed on actions that fall outside the opportunities that come through the integrated One CGIAR operational structure;

- c. Remain patient on the pathway to realizing the many expected returns of a more integrated system, as CGIAR works to overcome several transition delays, noting that realizing CGIAR's integrated matrix structure – endorsed by the System Council in March 2021 and intended to deliver deeper teamwork without parallel structures – has experienced delay due to not having the level of pooled funding mix that the structure requires; and
 - d. Support the Board in its quest to operate with a clearer role vis-à-vis the System Council, by considering the formation of a small and time-bound joint Board-System Council adhoc group, to consider possible areas of overlap between the two bodies, and solutions for increased efficiency in how the two bodies work going forward.
15. The Board Chair concluded his framing by thanking the System Council for its trust and confidence and noting that he and the Board look forward to moving ahead and fulfilling the One CGIAR mission of creating healthy, equitable, and sustainable food, land, and water systems for the benefit of all.
16. CGIAR's Executive Managing Director ('EMD') echoed the earlier framing remarks and expressed special thanks to Andrew Campbell, Julianne Biddle, Eleanor Dean, and the entire team at the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research ('ACIAR') for their wonderful hospitality. She noted that she and the other members of CGIAR's Executive Management Team ('EMT') remain fundamentally and profoundly committed to, and is making progress on all fronts towards, bringing the unification reforms to their conclusion in support of CGIAR's compelling mission.
17. The EMD provided an overview of where CGIAR finds itself on its 'One CGIAR' journey. Her update referenced key milestones, progress against the Chengdu November 2019 System Council outcomes and target dates, as well as areas for development and adaptive management plans. It was emphasized that this is a critical juncture coming on the heels of tremendous progress, and yet with remaining significant challenges, risks, and inherent complexities still ahead that will require thoughtful adaptation as understanding continues to evolve.
18. In looking forward, the EMD underscored four (4) pending critical objectives on the path to finalizing the One CGIAR unification reforms:
 - a. Having the earlier emphasized IFA by the Board Chair signed by all parties by the end of this calendar year;
 - b. Developing 'Internal rules' (e.g., common policies, procedures, service-level agreements, and other instruments) to implement the IFA, and make the integrated matrix structure fully work;
 - c. Rolling out the Window 3 / Bilateral Science Group Integration Mechanism and an enhanced Funder Engagement Framework; and
 - d. Enabling CGIAR's [Engagement Framework for Partnerships & Advocacy – Toward Greater Impact](#) by building on the recommendations from the Board-commissioned CGIAR High Level Advisory Panel ('HLAP'), which has held a series

of consultations aimed at strengthening strategic engagement with country and regional partners as CGIAR transitions to a unified and integrated 'One CGIAR'.

Key discussion areas

19. In their opening comments, System Council members echoed their deep appreciation to the broader ACIAR team and the System Council Secretariat for the quality of the organization for the SC17 meeting and related events. Those coming also expressed gratitude to the Board Chair and EMD for their remarks, and recognized CGIAR's broader leadership and management for the progress made to date to strengthen CGIAR, including through an integrated operational structure, with matrix management.
20. Reflections from System Council members of substantive points included:
 - a. Affirmation of the commitment to the fundamentals of 'One CGIAR' as a strategy to be a more relevant, responsive, and thoughtful local, regional, and global partner;
 - b. Unanimous support for the One CGIAR strategy and eagerness to complete institutional reforms so that CGIAR's collective focus as a system can be turned towards the cohesive, integrated, and impactful science of CGIAR;
 - c. Recognition of the tremendous progress already made, despite the long transition, including: i) a common research portfolio – which the ISDC has emphasized is the first time that CGIAR has delivered an interconnected portfolio; ii) a common reporting template built around CGIAR's 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy, with emphasis on learning through ongoing monitoring and evaluation efforts; and iii) and the strong quality of research being conducted;
 - d. Acknowledgment of the challenges, complexities and risks that are negatively impacting delivery of several of the reform objectives, with a need to: i) understand the adjustments that have been made through the principle of adaptive management; ii) prioritize key issues that still need to be addressed in the upcoming 12-18 months to successfully progress the reforms across the finish line; and iii) duly empower the Managing Directors of the science groups, and thus the Initiative leads, within a well-defined and fit-for-purpose approach to delivering research and innovation by a more integrated, aligned scientific community;
 - e. Awareness of the significance of System Council member support for completion of the transition, with a commitment to help bridge communication gaps to that end;
 - f. Agreement that the IFA needs to be signed by the end of this calendar year to provide clarity for all, and confirmation of willingness to advocate to Centers on the importance of signing the IFA and completing of the One CGIAR integration efforts;

- g. Understanding that, through adaptive and pragmatic management, refinements will be ongoing — as they have been since CGIAR's founding just over 50 years ago; and
- h. Agreement that there is no turning back from the decision to transform CGIAR to be an even more impactful and relevant partner than ever before.

Session outcome

- 21. Summarizing, the Chair reflected the System Council's unwavering support to see the 'One CGIAR' transformation realized, and acknowledged the strong progress made. He noted the System Council's recognition that, perhaps understandably, several challenges remain, and that members accepted that adaptive management remains critical to the 'learning as doing' philosophy that has been so much a part of how progress has been made to date. Finally, he reinforced the message from the Board and management that System Council members are themselves important change advocates, with appreciation for the continued effort by System Council members, with still more opportunities to engage.

Agenda Item 3: SRG pillars 1&2 — Our Mission & Unified Governance

- 22. Returning to the 'lightening talk' concept that the System Council has benefited from during past in-person meetings, CGIAR's EMD framed this session by emphasizing the shared view of CGIAR's [Senior Leadership](#) that only a systems-orientated approach will enable CGIAR to contribute to addressing the planetary boundary challenges and accelerate its value as a trusted voice for developmental impact. In the first of several 'voices from the ground' videos, the EMD turned to the highly appreciated videos from two of CGIAR's science voices:
 - a. [Cynthia Mugo](#) — who spoke to being accountable to multiple stakeholders and framing the impact of CGIAR research; and
 - b. [Silvia Alonso](#) — who spoke about increasing research and business resources for greater impact.
- 23. The EMD continued, emphasizing that with a systems-orientated lens firmly in mind, the IFA is intended to ensure a common understanding across CGIAR's Boards as to what was endorsed by the System Council in Chengdu nearly 3 years to the day, as evolved in terms of [unified governance](#) in August 2020 based on deliberations of CGIAR's Transition Advisory Group 3 process³. The EMD reaffirmed management's deep, forward commitment to continue to use adaptive management principles to implement an integrated operational structure for CGIAR through a dynamic matrix approach that empowers staff at all levels and ensures that decisions are taken where most appropriate for the topic and breadth of intended action.

³ TAG-3 included membership of the System Council, Center Board Chairs, staff of CGIAR Centers, and a DG representative. TAG-3 make consensus recommendations to the System Board, which in turn approved the definition of unified governance by its electronic decision SMB/M17/EDP6, effective 13 August 2020. The resulting checklist was informed by a whole of CGIAR legal opinion, summarized here: <https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2020/04/Summary-findings-of-the-legal-opinion-on-delivering-unified-governance-under-one-CGIAR.pdf>

24. It was clarified that both the IFA and integrated matrix structure are an investment in deepening CGIAR's internal partnerships. Further, they will help CGIAR build a more dynamic culture across CGIAR's Centers that is focused on continual adaptation to an ever changing and challenging external operating context, always making room for local differences whilst proceeding based on increased clarity at the governance level. The EMD expressed gratitude to the System Council for its support in helping to move the One CGIAR transition over the finish line.

Key discussion areas

25. Reflections arising from System Council participants, grouped around several overarching themes, included:

a. Theme: Risks to CGIAR if the IFA is not signed:

- i. Concern that CGIAR and its Centers will be seen to be unable bring an institutional transition to conclusion, with the consensus view being that the IFA is a key enabler of further, important progress for CGIAR to be an even more impactful partner than to date; and
- ii. Increasing pressure on, and the possible stagnation or loss of funding from key Funders, with selected Funder members stating there is no CGIAR without 'One CGIAR'.

b. Theme: Being aware of areas where the opportunity exists to clarify intent and scope, recognizing the consistent messaging from One CGIAR Board Chairs of their support for CGIAR's strategic approach to transforming food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis:

- i. Acknowledgement of the critical importance of adequate dialogue between Centers and their respective headquarters host countries, to provide reassurance that the IFA, and the 'One CGIAR' transition itself, in no way transforms the host country relationship that is so clearly articulated in each Center's host country agreement. One headquarters host country specifically noted the importance of taking the time that is necessary according to local contexts to dialogue and exchange information well, with appreciation for the efforts by the EMD to date on this front;
- ii. Several System Council voting members or alternate members who are also headquarter in host countries, expressed gratitude to the EMD and the senior leadership team for bringing to Center Boards, successive versions of the IFA that paid more attention to the work done in host countries, together with appreciation for working to mitigate several key concerns arising from initial versions of the IFA; and
- iii. On strengthening communications, it was emphasized that this includes ensuring timely responses in writing to questions that have arisen, being part of the important way that CGIAR can achieve a clear and long-term collective relationship across the globe that is strengthening the capacity of CGIAR without undermining any headquarters host country position,

and decision-making locally. It was added that it would be appreciated if efforts could be continually focused on actions beyond the text of legal documents to ensure sustainable close partnerships;

- c. *Theme: Ensuring efficient, effective unified governance, and taking stock of learnings going forward*
 - i. Affirmation that a well-defined and clear governance structure is crucial for CGIAR's ongoing successes, and recognition that the System Council's Chengdu plan for an 'accelerated pathway for unified governance by 2022' is important to be completed; and
 - ii. Recognition of the relevance of the agreement from the Board and the Center Board Chairs in and end-September 2022 meeting to undertake, by end-2023, a review of cross-CGIAR Center/System Board governance to understand if any adjustments efficiency and effectiveness ought to be made, and over what timetable.

Session outcomes

26. Summarizing, the Chair acknowledged the System Council's strong support to move to closure on the IFA by the end of the 2022 calendar year to ensure that CGIAR – as a system – is best positioned to be at the forefront of responsiveness to the interconnected challenges confronting the world in the 21st century. To do this, CGIAR needs to be more globally relevant at scale, while at the same time tailoring CGIAR research and innovation to the priorities of CGIAR partner regions and countries, especially in terms of small stakeholder farmers. He acknowledged the good-faith effort in seeking to remain true to the One CGIAR objectives and be respectful of all viewpoints. He noted the session's success in building awareness of the purpose of the IFA, with there being clear alignment of the 'critical enabler' nature of it. He ended the session confirming the strong sense of the 'we are behind you' message from the System Council.

Agenda Item 5: SRG pillar 4 – A New Research Modality

27. The meeting Co-Chair framed the session as an opportunity to focus on CGIAR's science and research financing, before examining the ways in which the integrated operational structure can enable CGIAR to be more impactful and a better innovative partner at a later agenda item.
28. The EMD provided several framing remarks, noting that until CGIAR's ways of working and funding are fully transitioned to the 'One CGIAR' approach, the collective vision for coherent science and innovation to advance the transformation of food, land, and water systems cannot be fully realized. That said, CGIAR's Science Group Managing Directors and the teams they work with are moving forward with its new, bold ambition of science delivery as much as possible.

29. CGIAR's Managing Director, Genetic Innovation, then gave a presentation on how the ambitions for Genetic Innovation as a globally integrated strategic program can only be achieved if CGIAR operates with integrated governance and management. Reiterating that ultimately this will be dependent on a coherent, innovative, systems-based portfolio, the Managing Director emphasized the importance of ensuring that:
- a. Center crop programs continue to provide key entry points for the private sector and policymakers;
 - b. Genebanks and breeding teams in different Centers have a unified crop strategy (for example: global rice program);
 - c. Breeding pipelines and teams work to demand-driven product profiles across CGIAR's five (5) impact areas based on shared market segment analyses;
 - d. There is coordination and costing of the full pipeline from discovery through to handover to NARES partners and seed systems;
 - e. There is a single memorandum of understanding ('MOU') for NARES, that covers all joint activities with all Centers to reduce the negative effects of multiple center-specific transactions; and
 - f. Genebank and breeding NARES-CGIAR networks in the same region pool procurement of goods and services.
30. CGIAR's Global Director, Business Operations and Finance, presented an overview of the budget design, and timeline for pooled funding for 2023, to fund CGIAR research and innovation, including full support for the Genebanks Initiative. It was noted that the new format of the CGIAR 3-year Financial Plan is intended to simplify the annual increasing complexity of the formerly titled 'FINPLAN', with the latter growing in sections and concepts, and thus moving away from the stated purpose of the material for the System Council.⁴ Beginning 2023, there will be a separation of the financial and non-financial aspects of planning tools. CGIAR will move to four (4) shorter and complimentary documents that provide for a full picture across the whole of CGIAR.
31. Key process and timeline highlights were provided, noting that the System Council can expect the first of the documents by end-December 2022, comprising a draft Window 1 budget paper and the 2022-2024 3-year Financial Plan – 2023 update.

Key discussion areas

32. System Council members expressed enthusiasm for CGIAR's science and innovation agenda, together with the Genebanks Initiative, with appreciation for the way forward on the 2023 updates of the financial and operational planning materials.
33. Additional reflections included:
- a. Suggestions from several System Council country partner constituencies for CGIAR to help find ways for the countries to collaborate with CGIAR's Genetic

⁴ Article 6.1.u) of the CGIAR System Framework requires presentation of a multiyear budget projection that includes submissions concerning the resources to finance the administrative costs of the CGIAR System, including the costs of the advisory bodies and the trustee of the CGIAR Trust Fund.

Initiatives and activities, including in some of the more challenging country situations;

- b. A request to include phasing-in and, as importantly, phasing out of Initiatives in the Financial Plan and business plan, in addition to clarity on decision-making authorities and mechanisms to move provisional funds across Windows;
- c. Recognition of agricultural challenges and opportunities in South-East Asia, such as declining crop lands and significant impacts from climate change, and the need for scientific collaboration and innovation and consistent messaging;
- d. Concern about building sustainability into Initiatives that ensures impact and self-sufficiency in solving regional agri-systems challenges, in part by enticing and attracting regional governments to invest by making a case for investment through a clearly articulated value proposition; and
- e. Attentiveness to the strengths and weaknesses of the NARES systems and affirmation that moving to a whole of country-MOU model for CGIAR engagement would create distinct efficiencies for both the NARES and Center-staff on the ground, and free up time for the delivery of research.

Session outcome

34. Summarizing, the Co-Chair reflected that the sense from the System Council discussions, and particularly the observations made by several of the country partner constituencies, is that CGIAR cannot work as it has in the past. Rather, an empowered whole-of-CGIAR institutional approach is required to facilitate joined-up, synergistic, aligned Initiative investments. System Council members were asked to support and promote alignment of the financial and costing model and policies within the integrated matrix structure, as well as ensuring that they sufficiently fund critical overhead costs and personnel needs to fully empower CGIAR's science agenda. Emphasis was also placed on the essential need for increased pooled funding to support delivery of the 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy.

Agenda Item 4: SRG pillar 3 – Institutional Integration

35. Linking to the immediate prior session, the meeting Chair framed the discussion, recalling that during SC16 (July 2022) and on a September 2022 adhoc call, the System Council was updated on ongoing appointment of staff across the horizontal dimension of the integrated matrix structure, knitting CGIAR together in many ways. It was highlighted that the hiring process to date had taken great advantage of internal talent and placed exceptional candidates in positions, with positive outcomes. It was underscored that the success of the integrated matrix structure is intrinsically connected to having the right authorities and funding incentives in place.
36. As additional framing, the EMD linked the meeting Chair's remarks to two 'lightening talk' videos from CGIAR scientists that highlight the joined up benefits of operating as One CGIAR:

- a. Inga Jacobs-Mata — who spoke to the importance of integrated governance and adaptive management for integrated science; and
 - b. Bernard Bett — who spoke to how operating as ‘One CGIAR’ is breaking down silos and having greater health impacts.
37. With reference to the meeting’s [pre-read](#), CGIAR’s Managing Director, Institutional Strategy and Systems, presented key achievements, progress, and challenges of implementing the integrated matrix structure. Focusing on the forward plan for the 2023-2024 period as a sub-set of CGIAR’s current 3-year plan, areas of focus included: the pace and scale of integration, including the cost structure questions and overheads; key benefits of One CGIAR policies and services; and the progression of the One CGIAR vision in regions and countries.
38. It was noted that CGIAR’s Executive Management Team – comprising the EMD, and each of the other Managing Directors – is working on the decision flows and codification of the integrated matrix structure, with signature of the IFA by all parties this year being an important confirmatory step. It was highlighted that a key purpose of the integrated matrix structure was to reduce cost and overhead, noting that a preliminary finding from a CGIAR-wide diagnostic shows an under-investment in technology, extensive manual effort to run operations, and underlining opportunities for cost efficiencies, including by:
- a. Clarifying and ensuring consistency in roles and responsibilities;
 - b. Automating and standardizing processes; and
 - c. Integrated systems and investment in technology.
39. An illustration of how the integrated matrix structure is an effective way to manage decision making and people was shared, noting how Information Technology (‘IT’) security might be integrated and rolled out across CGIAR in a way that minimizes the risk of duplication of effort, compared to the current operational model for CGIAR – multiple heads of finance, people and culture, IT, etc.

Key discussion areas

40. Before turning to a presentation on CGIAR’s enhanced focus on regions and countries, the Co-Chair offered time for reflections, with System Council members confirming their interest in learning more on the opportunities arising from a more integrated CGIAR. Observations included reflections around the following themes:
- a. A suggestion to consolidate the various integration ideas and guidelines into a single document for System Council members and other stakeholders to reflect on and provide feedback, including:
 - i. Interest in understanding how the Impact Area Platforms will cross over with the Initiatives and efficiently and effectively work around layers of subsidiarity, emphasizing that two-way vertical trust is essential in any organization; and

- ii. Additional clarity and coherence in communications as to how the Global and Regional Integrated Initiatives are working together, and not in silos;
 - b. Recognition of the importance of appropriately defined responsibilities, authorities, and reporting lines as an enabler of the integrated matrix structure for the more than 9,000 CGIAR scientists, researchers, technicians, and staff, together with:
 - i. Affirmation that diversity, equity, and inclusion are top-of-mind considerations for the System Council, with a critical need to maintain a focus on ensuring as many opportunities for women as there are for men;
 - ii. Awareness of impacts on staff morale and culture during significant change cycles, with an eye to balancing the pace of change. That is, not so slow that it causes staff to feel stuck and exhausted, and yet not so fast that staff feel overwhelmed;
 - c. Acknowledgement of the pressing opportunity to integrate and coordinate service delivery across CGIAR:
 - i. Understanding that patience will be needed during the completion of the shift to full implementation of the integrated matrix structure; and
 - ii. Acknowledgement that efficiency/cost-saving feasibility reviews are underway and until they are completed it will be difficult to get definitive figures about anticipated cost savings related to the One CGIAR integrated structure.
- 41. CGIAR's Managing Director, Regions and Partnership, joining the meeting for this session, delivered a presentation on how CGIAR has shifted considerably from a Center-specific focus, to one of engaging regional partners in a more coordinated and systematic way to better align CGIAR priorities with country and regional needs and demands. He shared key milestones from the past year:
 - a. Six (6) Regional Directors appointed;
 - b. CGIAR Engagement Framework for Partnerships and Advocacy launched;
 - c. Interim country conveners appointed;
 - d. Ongoing regional dialogues & engagement;
 - e. Regional pages launched on CGIAR.org: <https://www.cgiar.org/research/cgiar-regions/>.
- 42. As a specific example of the regional focus in action, the Center's Director General representative, participating as a non-voting System Council member, and with his 'hat' on as CGIAR's Regional Director for South-East Asia and Pacific, shared how CGIAR is organizing its research agenda in cooperation with partners in that region. He emphasized that leveraging these alliances, with the revised approach, is still not without some early challenges. However, positively, these efforts are beginning to attract new country investments to work in partnership with CGIAR in achieving food security in the face of the climate crisis.

43. It was further noted that a core focus of the Regional Integrated Initiatives is to ensure there is an integrated response to local demands across CGIAR's action areas as a key modality for delivering priority development solutions from integrated research and innovation. It was highlighted that these Initiatives operate by co-identifying challenges and research foci with key partners, and by co-designing, co-creating, and co-learning with these partners throughout the innovation process.

Key discussion areas

44. The Co-Chair expressed appreciation for each speaker's emphasis on integrated engagement activities with stakeholders and partners at the regional and country levels. Additional reflections included:
- a. Expression of appreciation to the HLAP for its recommendations on stakeholder engagement that led to CGIAR's [Engagement Framework for Partnerships & Advocacy – Toward Greater Impact](#) ('Engagement Framework');
 - b. Support for the Regional Integrated Initiatives and acknowledgement that they are in the experimental stage and showing promise and value in negotiating with NARES as partners on research collaborations, with more thinking, development and co-creating to be done, cognizant of the middle ground to mitigate and prioritize regional demands; and
 - c. Requests for more communications on the Regional Integrated Initiatives, including:
 - How they align with the Global Initiatives in the CGIAR portfolio;
 - The funding trajectory beyond 2023; and
 - What the subsidiarity, delegating authority, capacity, and decision-making processes are to ensure appropriate two-way delegations.

Session outcome

45. Summarizing, the Co-Chair recapped the System Council's strong support for CGIAR's partner ecosystem as it continues to evolve, with strong encouragement for the Engagement Framework to be a catalyst for stronger partnerships in regions and countries, as well as maximizing efforts to connect partners with the best CGIAR has to offer, to convene stakeholders, and to continuously working to strike the right balance between strategic focus and responding with agility to changing needs.

Agenda Item 6: SRG pillar 5 – More, and More Pooled Funding

46. The Chair framed the conversation on pooled funding by first expressing great appreciation for the efforts of the many System Council members who have defended and expanded pooled funding to CGIAR, including in the face of tightening budgets. He also echoed the Board Chair's opening statement, recognizing that a large share of CGIAR funding continues to enable fragmentation rather than integration, highlighting that there are many opportunities and avenues to provide more funding, more pooled and aligned funding, and more long-term funding.

47. CGIAR's Global Director, Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization, shared a projected funding outlook against the backdrop of uncertain global economic outlook and how CGIAR is seeking to mitigate risks and look for opportunities for diversification, including funding capacity-sharing across national research systems and the next generation of researchers. He presented financial highlights and emerging financial issues
48. The overall outlook should be seen as largely positive; as reflected in slide 47 of meeting [pre-read](#).
49. The presentation highlighted the greatest areas of needs for investment in CGIAR, including a 'ratings concept' for the various mechanisms:
 - a. 'AAA Rating' for pooled funding via Window 1 Trust Fund funding of the portfolio and Initiatives with common assurance and reporting, supporting implementation of the One CGIAR strategy, and the only mechanism available to fund CGIAR's Portfolio of Initiatives — and which may be undesignated, or designated across the Global and Regional Integrated Initiatives and Impact Area Platforms;
 - b. 'AA Rating' pooled Science Group Integration via Window 3/bilateral funding of Programs with a common finance and assurance framework, helping to empower CGIAR research delivery through the integrated structure; and
 - c. 'A Rating' diversified institutional funding mechanisms, including emerging markets, climate finance, IFIs, and private-innovative finance, which can only be unlocked by 'One CGIAR' through unified, integrated approach — noting that the siloed approach has been holding CGIAR back.
50. The presentation concluded with several asks of the System Council Funder members:
 - a. To maintain a focus on pooled funding through available channels;
 - b. To align to Window 3 funding as an integral part of realizing the goals of CGIAR's 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy;
 - c. To invest in the transition to operating as One CGIAR, including people & culture; gender, diversity, and inclusion efforts; digital & data integration; financial mechanisms; and breaking down the barriers to implementation; and
 - d. To anticipate a pivot in how CGIAR approaches funding Initiatives – taking a replenishment and recommitment approach for the next 3-year cycle.

Key discussion areas

51. In discussions that followed, System Council members expressed great appreciation for the clear and excellent presentation. Additional reflections included the following:
 - a. Acknowledgment of the potential to attract new investors, with CGIAR currently receiving just a small percentage of the available global agri-food, climate and water systems investments, and encouragement to assertively pursue new diverse and creative funding streams;

- b. Affirmation that funding NARES for partnering on climate-related and other research will have a positive long-term investment outlook, together with acknowledgment of the optimistic outlook in exploring the 'AA Rating' Window 3 funding as an entry point to funding global public goods, with CGIAR's value proposition to make the case;
- c. Acknowledgement that important transition decisions on the horizon, for example, (re)branding, could carry significant institutional reputational risks, and the importance of communicating early and transparently with Funders was stressed; and
- d. Emphasis that as CGIAR advocates for and works to increase pooled funding, these investments be shared across all CGIAR's value propositions and elevate the importance of global research and innovation for food, land and water systems inside and outside CGIAR.

Session outcome

- 52. Summarizing, the Chair acknowledged the commitment of System Council Funders and partners for their support for empowering the integrated matrix structure. He further recognized the System Council's openness for the new Window 3 and bilateral Science Group funding mechanism as a means of strengthening partnerships, and the overall positive forward financial outlook, while not giving up on the ambitious objective to evolve CGIAR into a \$2 billion annual partnership, to serve the world.

Agenda Item 7: Spotlight on Gender, Diversity & Inclusion in Workplaces

- 53. The meeting Chair handed over to CGIAR's EMD for framing of the session, who in turn brought in two additional 'lightening talk' videos from CGIAR's scientists as follows:
 - a. Nicoline de Haan — who spoke on how GDI concepts are embraced across the whole of CGIAR and included in the Global and Regional Integrated Initiatives for greater impact; and
 - b. Alessandra Galie — who spoke about incorporating GDI in research in development.
- 54. After recognizing the breadth and relevance of the presentations to the session topic, the EMD commended the collective efforts of so many staff, leaders and CGIAR Board members to advance and more extensively embed a deep and lasting commitment to advance gender, diversity, and inclusion ('GDI') across CGIAR's workplaces.
- 55. A first key highlight signaled by the EMD, was CGIAR's commitment to consciously push boundaries. Two examples were highlighted: i) the requirement for gender balance on the Initiative design teams in the lead and co-lead positions, and ii) keeping all forms of diversity front of mind in building the new senior leadership team and structure⁵.

⁵ 13 of the 14 CGIAR 'Directors General' of CGIAR Centers/Alliances (including CIFOR-ICRAF and ICRISAT) are men. Differently the <https://www.cgiar.org/senior-leadership/> page demonstrates more women, and broader ethnic diversity in the matrix management structure.

56. CGIAR's Global Director, People & Culture, recalled the vision for CGIAR to become an innovative model employer that actively supports and promotes GDI as set out in its [Framework for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion in CGIAR's Workplaces](#), and demonstrates CGIAR's deep commitment to operating according to the highest standards.
57. A high-level GDI progress update was presented, demonstrating that CGIAR has surpassed its internal GDI targets set out in the [CGI Action Plan for 2020-2021](#). It was noted that even in a time of fundamental organizational change and during a global pandemic, the GDI function achieved 101 of its 108 targets for the two-year period.
58. Key achievements highlighted during the session by the presenter included:
 - a. CGIAR's workplaces are becoming more gender-balanced — exceeding the target of 40% women in professional roles by December 2021, with more progress being made towards gender parity in the past few years than in the entire decade prior;
 - b. There is clear and visible leadership support for GDI in CGIAR workplaces, so that advancing GDI principles is accepted as an integral part of operating as 'One CGIAR';
 - c. There is greater awareness and understanding of GDI as enabling concepts; and
 - d. GDI is being gradually mainstreamed into CGIAR policies and practices – as more and more staff become internal champions of the positive benefits of a GDI lens.

Key discussion areas

59. Following the presentation, reflections included the following observations:
 - a. Recognition of CGIAR's GDI ongoing progress, including appreciation and high praise for those people in senior leadership roles – many of whom, but not all have been women – who have been unequivocal champions of this work;
 - b. Deep appreciation to the many hundreds of other staff whose work has helped CGIAR achieve more progress in GDI in its workplaces in the last 2 years than over the last 10 years combined;
 - c. Enthusiasm for expanding CGIAR's focus on other dimensions of diversity and inclusion, to ensure all other elements beyond gender receive the relevant emphasis – whilst in no way ignoring the realities of unintended and structural barriers to women, and women scientists in complex settings especially, from growing in their roles, and being promoted accordingly; and
 - d. Awareness of the importance, once again, of the IFA being agreed and signed, to better steward, support and promote the GDI vision across all CGIAR workplaces.

Session outcome

60. Summarizing, the Chair acknowledged the tremendous progress and CGIAR's ongoing work and commitment to GDI principles in every part of how it works, emphasizing the

opportunity of the current moment, as positions are being filled in the integrated matrix structure, to make significant additional progress in fulfilling GDI goals, and acknowledging that GDI concepts will be a standing agenda item for future System Council regular meetings⁶.

Agenda Item 8: Assurance Systems & Functions

61. The Co-Chair provided framing remarks on the importance of assurance systems and mechanisms and commended the professionalism and collective efforts of so many to advance the assurance systems and functions across all CGIAR actions. It was noted that the [Ethics and Business Conduct recent annual report](#) demonstrates CGIAR's deep commitments to operating according to the highest ethical standards, and addressing instances where important questions arise regarding behaviors and practices.
62. The Board Chair echoed these framing remarks, noting the Board was committed to operating according to the highest standards of ethics and business conduct. After providing brief reflections from the end-September 2022 Board meeting, he affirmed that CGIAR's ethics framework is at the forefront of all CGIAR's work as a key enabler of the 'One CGIAR' way of working.
63. CGIAR's Senior Director, Ethics & Business Conduct, joined virtually to highlight several key achievements in the first full year of CGIAR operating with an identifiable unit for ethics and business conduct across CGIAR. Points included establishing an ombudsman function and a CGIAR-wide whistleblowing hotline, accessible to all staff wherever located with multiple alternative avenues to raise concerns; and an overhaul of CGIAR's ethics website to provide additional resources, training materials and more.
64. Additionally, forward looking plans were shared, including
 - a. A full ethics portal to allow for increased user engagement, additional training and resources, and more data-driven analysis;
 - b. Specific focus on strengthening a whole of CGIAR approach to research ethics, including the role of Institutional Review Boards Institutional Research Ethics Committees;
 - c. Formally creating an independent redress mechanism and dispute resolution procedures further in line with international standards; and
 - d. Further developing environmental, social and governance ethics compliance reporting opportunities.

Key discussion areas

65. In discussions that followed, System Council members expressed appreciation for the important work and progress in the first year of operating with a clearly identifiable ethics and business conduct team for all CGIAR, to bring additional enhancements in consistency of approaches.

⁶ Refer to 'SC/M17/AP3 Gender, Diversity and Inclusion in CGIAR' under session outcomes of the SC17 Other Business and Meeting Close agenda item.

66. Several System Council members reemphasized that ethics and good business standards are founding principles of CGIAR. Accordingly, they reinforced the importance of acknowledging that CGIAR's assurance functions (ethics, internal audit, and others) act as true 'business partners' to Centers and leadership across CGIAR, in large part because the System Council and Board fully support and endorse and own the responsibility of operating according to the highest business standards.
67. Additional contributions from System Council members included:
 - a. A recommendation that CGIAR continue to be flexible and inclusive of ancestral indigenous, multilingualism, and other traditional contexts, and consider mechanisms to ensure adequate operational capacity to allow this kind of knowledge to be shared; and
 - b. Acknowledgement that research ethics is a challenging area that is critical to the success of CGIAR, with appreciation that CGIAR is working on developing policies, procedures and trainings in this area, and that there is an existing CGIAR community of practice that is committed to standards and operate with flexibility, striking the right balance, between lessons learned, standard good practices, and flexibility for cultural context.

Session outcome

68. Summarizing, the Co-Chair acknowledged the tremendous progress in the domain of CGIAR maturing its ethics and business conduct approach, both internally and in the broader context and perception of the outside world. It was noted that that the System Council looks forward to ongoing briefings in the foreseeable future.

Agenda Item 10: CGIAR's Independent Advisory functions and support

69. The Co-Chair provided framing remarks, in advance of a high-level overview of the whole-of-CGIAR advisory and evaluation service functional responsibilities presented by the Director of CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service team ('IEAS').
70. The IAES Director presented a [brief overview](#) of the team's planned operational support for CGIAR's multi-year, independent evaluation plan, including support for the ISDC and SPIA, and noted that the 2023 workplans and budgets were in line with their respective Terms of Reference ('TOR') and in support of implementing the [CGIAR Evaluation Framework](#) and the [CGIAR Evaluation Policy](#).
71. It was highlighted that IAES works according to the global 'three-line assurance model'⁷, which includes assurance of i) Governing bodies: accountability to stakeholders for organizational oversight; ii) Management: actions, including management risks, to achieve objectives; and iii) Independent assurance: evaluation conducted in line with standards and principles guided by CGIAR evaluation criteria, promoting organizational accountability, and learning for effective and efficient research planning, decision-making and management across CGIAR.

⁷ <https://www.theiaa.org/globalassets/site/about-us/advocacy/three-lines-model-updated.pdf>

72. During the presentation, the IAES Director strongly advocated for robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning ('MEL') staffing support to be added at all levels of assurance, to complement the third-line assurance provided through independent evaluation.
73. The Council Member from the United Kingdom constituency, in his role as Interim Chair of Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee ('SIMEC'), informed the System Council that SIMEC reviewed and endorsed the IAES, ISDC and SPIA 2023 workplans and budgets at SIMEC's October 2022 meeting.

Key discussion areas

74. In discussions that followed, System Council members expressed appreciation for the important work being undertaken to provide assurance on the quality of research and innovation, and delivery.
75. Additional reflections included:
 - a. Clear support for ensuring that IAES and the experts working with them are appropriately resourced to accelerate the availability of the Initiative assessments, and the recommendation that MEL capacity is enhanced in the science groups;
 - b. Acknowledgement that monitoring systems are only as valuable as the quality of the information supporting them, and thus a recommendation that high-level assurance across CGIAR may be aided, in concert, by the Portfolio Performance Unit (PPU) and Portfolio Coordination Unit (PCU) providing incentives for desirable behaviors (carrots) and the IAES deterring unhelpful behaviors (sticks) to provide consistency;
 - c. Recommendations to empower the PPU and PCU with the surge capacity needed to engage all Initiatives effectively to deliver against the new arrangements for the next 18 months, and consider delaying some of SPIA's less time-sensitive 2023 workplan items to enable a greater focus on the quality requirements of the current portfolio Initiatives;
 - d. Affirmation that assessments as 'learning studies' that test the theories of change (where SPIA works with the Initiatives providing high-level advice and linking them up with external experts outside CGIAR) are distinct from long-term impact assessments that are also needed;
 - e. A request to better understand how evaluation principles and practices are built into the Initiatives to provide robust data; and
 - f. A request for more comprehensive narratives that Council Funder member may use to prospectively increase investments.

Session outcome

76. Summarizing, the Co-Chair noted the support from the System Council regarding the quality of the CGIAR Evaluation Framework, and the value that the System Council sees in having reliable data upon which to know which Initiatives are performing well and

which are not. Further, the System Council recognized the need to have appropriate resources in place to ensure compliance across CGIAR, and the importance of telling the story of ongoing efforts.

77. **Decision SC/M17/DP3: Workplan and Budget of Advisory Bodies**

Pursuant to Article 6.1 u) of the CGIAR System Framework, the System Council **approved** the 2023 Workplan & Budget for CGIAR's Independent Advisory & Evaluation Service, Independent Science for Development Council, and Standing Panel on Impact Assessment, as set out in meeting document SC17-10.

Agenda Item 13: System Council's Standing Committees

78. Noting constraints in timing, the Co-Chair referred System Council members to the annual reports of its Standing Committees in the pre-read materials (documents SC17-13b and SC17-13c) and invited the System Council Secretary to give a brief overview of the nominees being recommended to fill several vacancies on the Standing Committees provided in the pre-read materials (documents SC17-13b and SC17-13c).

79. The System Council Secretary noted that the nominees for several committee vacancies brought relevant experience and skills, and noted that when taken as a whole, the nominees would enhance gender, age and regional diversity on the Standing Committees.

Session outcomes

80. **Decision SC/M17/DP4 - ISDC Member Appointment**

Pursuant to Article 6.1 f) of the CGIAR System Framework, the System Council **appointed** Dr. David Just as member of CGIAR's Independent Science for Development Council for a three-year term effective from 15 November 2022.

81. **Decision SC/M17/DP5 - SPIA Membership Appointments**

Pursuant to paragraph 4.7 of the terms of reference of the Standing Panel for Impact Assessment, the System Council **confirmed** the appointments of the following persons:

- a. Dr. Kyle Emerick as SPIA Standing Panel Member for an additional three-year term with effect from 1 January 2023 unless otherwise decided by the System Council; and
- b. Dr. Rachid Laajaj as a Special Initiative Member for an additional three-year term with effect from 1 January 2023 unless otherwise decided by the System Council.

82. **Decision SC/M17/DP6 - SIMEC Membership Appointments**

Pursuant to paragraph 9 of the terms of reference of the System Council's Strategic Impact, Monitoring & Evaluation Committee ('SIMEC'), the System Council:

- a. **Appointed** the following persons as members of SIMEC until 30 June 2023 or such time as a successor is appointed:

- i. Nikita Eriksen-Hamel (Canada)
 - ii. Gary Jahn (USA)
 - iii. Fatma Sarsu (Türkiye)
 - b. Retroactively extends the terms of all other members of SIMEC until 30 June 2023 or such time as a successor is appointed.
83. **Decision SC/M17/DP7 - AOC Membership Appointments**
Pursuant to paragraph 7 of the terms of reference of the System Council's Assurance Oversight Committee, the System Council:
- a. **Appointed** Flora Mak (Canada) and Sarah Schmidt (Germany) as members of the Assurance Oversight Committee ('AOC') until 30 June 2023 or such time as their successors are appointed; and
 - b. Retroactively **extended** the term of Muriel Uzán as a member of the AOC until 30 June 2023 or such time as a successor is appointed.

Agenda Item 9: System Board and System Council responsibilities

84. In framing the session, the session Chair indicated that, upon the System Board's request, the System Council is being invited to reflect on a proposal to establish a small, joint cross-functional group to explore perceptions of inefficiencies and duplication across mandates, in a pragmatic and time-bound way. It was further noted that this was intended to be a discussion to consider incremental changes, versus fundamental transformation to the governing structure's architecture.
85. The Board Chair noted the Board's awareness that there may be views of several System Council members that now may not be the time for creating another body or committee. He highlighted that the Board felt strongly that the current division of governance roles and responsibilities and modalities for engagement should be better aligned to reflect the significant evolution of how CGIAR works over the past several years.
86. It was noted that the Board was proposing an exploratory conversation as a pragmatic way to review and make any recommendations of efficiency, balance, and elimination of duplication of efforts, and to incrementally evolve to be a more coherent and efficient governance system. The Board Chair invited the two board member guests to add remarks. These remarks reinforced this request as being a light-touch opportunity to consider how the System Council and Board work, how they can further complement each other to reduce duplication of efforts, and how to provide greater value for CGIAR and its investors and partners.

Key discussion areas

87. The Chair opened the floor for reflections. Overall System Council members supported operating with the right balance of governing roles and responsibilities between the System Council and Board. There was mixed support regarding establishing a joint time-bound group currently, and with a perceived formality of a group or body, noting:

- a. Several System Council members supported the proposal for a small group to facilitate an important structured conversation that looked at the rules, responsibilities and functions of each governing body and offering recommendations for the System Council and Board's reflection;
- b. Others reflected on the already challenging change-management environment, and suggested that it may be more appropriate for a high-level review of CGIAR's governance structure to be undertaken in due time after the One CGIAR transition, to gauge if the CGIAR governance structure was still fit for purpose in CGIAR's multilateral development context; and
- c. Additionally, there were several questions regarding pace and timing, with a need for enhanced communication flows that are comprehensive and manageable.

Session outcomes

88. The session Chair noted that the System Council's preference for some additional information on the key challenges from the perspective of the System Board, and in the meantime, consider how to enhance the communication flow between the Board and System Council, with equal access to what is being developed and how workflows are moving ahead.
89. **Action SC/M17/AP1 – Governing Bodies**
Through the System Council Secretary, the CGIAR System Board was **invited** to provide a short memorandum on areas for improved coherence between the two governing bodies by **12 December 2022**, to inform a further System Council discussion on the proposal for re consideration of the distribution of roles and responsibilities between the System Council and System Board.
90. **Action SC/M17/AP2 – System Council Standing Committees**
The System Council **requested** its Standing Committees to review their respective terms of reference to consider whether to recommend any proposed changes, and report to the System Council the outcome of that review **by not later than 14 April 2023**.

Agenda Item 11: Independent Science for Development Matters

91. The System Council watched two final 'lightening talk' videos introduced by the EMD as 'voices from the ground,' to provide an introduction to a discussion on impact:
 - a. **Young Wha Lee**, Lead of the Breeding Resources Initiative – who spoke about how more and better data supports breeders as they integrate innovative technologies into their work to support farmers by identifying the best varieties faster; and
 - b. **Michael Abberton**, the Head of the Genebanks Resources Center at IITA and One CGIAR Convener in Sierra Leone – who spoke to how the Genebanks Initiative delivers impact now and in the future in the face of climate and other global challenges.

92. The Co-Chair framed the session by noting the value that strong independent advice brings not only to the System Council and System Board as they take their respective decisions, but also those delivering on the research to strengthen it on an ongoing basis. With that, he welcomed the Chair of CGIAR's Independent Science for Development Council ('ISDC').
93. The ISDC Chair presented a high-level overview of the Quality of Research for Development ('QoR4D') framework that CGIAR adopted as a guide to assessing research and innovation for development outcomes, which underpins CGIAR's ability to ensure ongoing learning and evaluation of science quality. He shared that ISDC employs the QoR4D framework to support CGIAR's vision of building a contemporary research portfolio, establishing rigorous monitoring and reporting systems, and designing transparent performance management standards. In a 'learning as doing' philosophy, the ISDC Chair presented core insights gleaned from a survey to external proposal subject matter experts, including the following recommendations:
- a. Update the criteria to amplify comparative advantage and innovation;
 - b. Provide deeper thinking topics for leadership: i) Consultation & partnerships, ii) Comparative Advantage, iii) Research justifications & questions; iv) Cohesion across Initiatives;
 - c. Improve proposal template for flow and include an executive summary; and
 - d. Adapt 17 criteria for Initiative proposals that are more enabling, and less science focused (for example: Genebanks).
94. The presentation provided more information about ISDC's workstreams:
- a. Comparative Advantage: Based on a consistent comment across ISDC's review of Initiative proposals, ISDC developed a framework to provide an evidence-based approach to determining CGIAR and its research entities' Comparative Advantage;
 - b. Inclusive Innovation: One of the four elements of QoR4D is legitimacy, and for CGIAR inclusivity is imperative to ensure that "the research process is fair and ethical and perceived as such"; and
 - c. Science Forum: The 2022 Science Forum events at TropAg and FAO examined two elements of innovation: inclusion and institutions.
95. The ISDC Chair also presented a high-level overview of the 2023 workplan, drawing on the detailed pre-read [papers](#) available at agenda item 11.

Key discussion areas

96. In discussions that followed System Council members expressed strong appreciation for ISDC's rigorous and independent strategic advice. Additional reflections included:
- a. Appreciation for the significant investment made by System Council Funder members to pooled funding in support of the CGIAR portfolio;

- b. A suggestion for the ISDC to undertake a holistic assessment of CGIAR's portfolio to advise on how to create greater coherence between Initiatives, noting that the ISDC did review the current portfolio of 32 Initiatives for cohesion, whilst recognizing that there were structural limitations on that review by reason that the transition to working as One CGIAR was incomplete at that time;
- c. Strong support for reviewing CGIAR's disparate funding mechanisms and identifying the best funding mechanisms for CGIAR going forward. In particular, considering the possibility of supporting funding mechanisms that permit Science Group transversal actions (which currently seems to fall under 'Window 3 and bilateral funding'), to prepare the next programs beyond the gaps and overlaps among the current Initiatives;
- d. A suggestion that the ISDC consider having a general discourse about the quality of science through a gender, diversity, and inclusion lens, including whether CGIAR is providing enough opportunities to researchers from the Global South;
- e. Encouragement for the ISDC to turn some of its recommendations from independent reviews and other advice and learning processes into 'how to' formats that could be helpful to researchers;
- f. A call for new ideas for new research that includes social scientists and scientists who can function in a complex organization to achieve impact. Further, a recommendation to be more sensitive to the skills needed to build teams and collaborate, including working with scientists outside the CGIAR system (such as at universities);
- g. Hearing that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has a new scientific advisory committee that includes System Council and Board members, which will bring natural opportunities to collaborate with the ISDC;
- h. Taking note that the private sector is a leader in sharing information on foresight and working with multinational organizations on science impact delivery — and part of ISDC's TOR is to work to distill foresight information from various resources for CGIAR;
- i. Providing CGIAR's science group leaders with greater flexibility through discretionary funding to use towards greater coherence and integration may be a better way to create alignment rather than making ever large/broader Initiatives which may not have enough specificity for what our funders need to make our Initiatives fundable;
- j. A recommendation for the ISDC, System Council and Board to take a more active role in the development of CGIAR's next portfolio of Initiatives — considering the size and critical mass of the whole portfolio for better understanding, to ensure CGIAR's focus is on the top-priority, most impactful research for development, cautious not to disperse energy on smaller-scale 'boutique' projects; and
- k. Endorsement of ISDC endeavoring to incorporate Comparative Advantage preliminary assessments into the current workplan, to support the development of stronger Initiatives in the future.

97. Summarizing, the Co-Chair thanked members for their comments, noting that the System Council looks forward to independent expert advice from the ISDC well ahead of the next portfolio development. He confirmed that the System Council values the ISDC's advice on the clear pathways for cohesive impactful research portfolios that separate coherence from scale. He also confirmed that the System Council looks forward to considering a proposal for contemporary funding mechanisms and ways to balance new and exciting science, at the same time as embedding planned ways to end less compelling research programs.

Agenda Item 12: Standing Panel on Impact Assessment

98. The Co-Chair framed the conversation by noting that the SPIA Chair would be providing a high-level update on SPIA's workplan, about to enter the final cycle of its 6-year plan as previously approved by the System Council.
99. The SPIA Chair referred to the pre-read materials (background document SC17-12) and provided a brief overview on SPIA's activities and 2023 workplan, highlighting new asks coming to SPIA from different stakeholders including the System Council, individual members of SIMEC, CGIAR leadership, the PPU and CGIAR partners. As an overarching observation it was noted that these asks are of various proportions and bring differing implications in terms of future work planning. Accordingly, SPIA is routing the various enquiries through SIMEC, to seek guidance on prioritization, capacity recommendations, and how resources can best be organized for delivery.
100. The SPIA Chair provided highlights of their primary workflow objectives, including:
- a. Support of CGIAR's strong commitment to embed a culture of impact assessment into the System
 - b. Expand and deepen evidence of causal impact of CGIAR research investments:
 - i. Accountability studies:
 - Long-Term, Large-Scale impacts
 - Environmental impacts
 - ii. Learning studies:
 - Adapted Strategies to enhance uptake of CGIAR innovations
 - Impacts of Digital Support Tools in Agriculture
 - c. System-level country studies on diffusion and use of CGIAR-related innovations and policy influences
 - d. Cross-cutting: measurement & methodological agenda:
 - i. Technological and methodological advances built in
 - ii. Provide measurement guidance based on proof-of-concept
101. The SPIA Chair also presented updates on CGIAR-wide evidence on the reach of CGIAR innovations as well as a preview of upcoming results on new data from an ongoing Ethiopia study, a Vietnam study, and a Uganda study. In concluding the presentation, the SPIA Chair confirmed they are also discussing with SIMEC if its current model should be revisited, to perhaps propose a new organizational model with responsive capabilities and decentralized operational support.

Key discussion areas

102. In discussions that followed, System Council members endorsed SPIA working with SIMEC to bring a recommendation back about addressing SPIA's capacity needs to enable SPIA to fulfil its vital and expanding mandate. Additional reflections included:
- a. Deep appreciation for the presentation and admiration for the work of SPIA;
 - b. Strong support for the practice of applying the best of what we know through robust impact data, with recognition that more information about what resources SPIA needs will be forthcoming to ensure adequate and appropriately configured capacity;
 - c. Suggestions for SPIA to free up capacity by considering focusing on impact assessments and allowing universities to assess research methods, as well as working with partners who are willing to coordinate with SPIA on innovative planning to tell a better story;
 - d. A question about how many countries SPIA thinks it needs to assess to provide a compelling case for the work of CGIAR, and for that query to be taken on notice; and
 - e. A question about what is needed in terms of building social science capacity in CGIAR to ensure longer run capacity in this area.

Session outcome

103. Summarizing, the Co-Chair noted the timeliness of considering SPIA's resources and capacity as CGIAR delivers on expanding demands for impact assessments. He observed that the Australian National Audit Office's practice guideline for program evaluations recommends spending two percent (2%) of budget on assessments, and that the current understanding is that CGIAR's contribution is lower. Here, he noted that the System Council seems positively disposed to expanding SPIA's capacity for best-in-class impact assessment work, including through an alternate business model.

Agenda Item 14a: Capturing Our Messaging

104. The Chair framed the session noting that the deliberations across the two days demonstrated full alignment on the importance of the Integration Framework Agreement as an enabler of moving from a status of continual transition, to one of thoughtful evolution built on clear agreement and awareness of the purpose and basis of operating as One CGIAR. To guide the conversation, the Chair asked if, in viewing the page and a half draft 'Brisbane Moment' message circulated as agreed during the lunch break⁸, if there was anything in the material that any System Council would need adjusted from an overall concept, rather than line-by-line editing.

⁸ At the time the System Council adopted the SC17 agenda, that agenda proposed a short draft message be circulated at the lunch break on day 2 to allow time to consider before moving into meeting agenda 14a.

105. One System Council member expressed strong views on the scope and length of the draft document. Namely, that its contents were far broader than anticipated, and thus requiring more time for review and reflection than was being proposed. The member emphasized that adequate time is particularly required for those System Council members who are representatives of national governments. After several exchanges on scope – with many System Council members supporting the longer draft – on balance, there was acceptance that the priority was to communicate unequivocally on the System Council’s fully aligned position on the importance of the CGIAR Integration Framework Agreement being signed by all parties by year end. With time passing, and broad consensus three key parts of the possible ‘Brisbane moment’ message, the Chair invited the Executive Managing Director to find consensus on that text with the System Council member who had expressed concerns.

Session outcome

106. **Decision SC/M17/DP8 – CGIAR’s evolving Integration Framework Agreement**
The System Council agreed on the importance of issuing a ‘Brisbane moment’ statement on the Integration Framework Agreement at the same time as release of the Chair’s SC17 Summary.

As a matter of record, that agreement was achieved shortly after the meeting close, and thus the ‘[Brisbane moment](#)’ statement was issued at the same time as the Chair’s [SC17 Summary](#), on 3 November 2022 and broadly distributed across the System Council, the System Board and staff.

Agenda Item 14b: Other Business and Meeting Close

107. The System Council Secretary introduced the **Consent Agenda**, recalling that a consent agenda consists of items that are procedural in nature or have been through extensive prior consultation or Committee processes and require formal System Council decision. The Secretary confirmed that no requests to remove any item from the Consent Agenda had been received by the relevant period, and thus the Consent Agenda was being put up for approval. The System Council approved the consent agenda.⁹
108. As a **follow up to the discussion on gender, diversity and inclusion** (‘GDI’), the System Council accepted the proposal from a System Council member that GDI be a standing item.
109. **Action SC/M17/AP3: Gender, Diversity and Inclusion in CGIAR**
Gender, Diversity and Inclusion (‘GDI’) will be a standing agenda item for future System Council regular meetings, with a rotating area of specific focus in any given meeting.

⁹ Refer to ‘Decision SC/M17/DP5 - SPIA Membership Appointments’ under session outcomes of the SC17 SPIA agenda item.

110. The Chair recognized and expressed sincere gratitude and friendship to Marco Ferroni, who will be stepping down as Board Chair after 5 years. The Chair recognized for and on behalf of the System Council, the Board Chair's extraordinary support in helping steward CGIAR's critical transformation to being stronger than the sum of its parts as 'One CGIAR'.
111. On behalf of the System Council, the Chair also recognized Karmen Bennett who will be stepping away from her System Council Secretary role in the coming months after serving in that role for more six years.
112. The Chair expressed the System Council's deep appreciation to the Co-Chair in his role as ACIAR CEO and the broader ACIAR team for their generous hosting of the SC17 meeting and related excellent events.
113. In response to an invitation for expressions of interest to host a Q2-2023 or Q4 2023 System Council meeting, the delegate of the West Asia & North Africa System Council member proposed that they would explore within their constituency and other partner countries, whether the region could hold a meeting in 2023. For example, a meeting in Morocco, Jordon, Türkiye or otherwise, to enable System Council members to observe the challenges that CGIAR is working together with partners to solve. Welcoming that offer to explore this possibility and appreciating it was not currently a firm proposal, the Chair invited other System Council members to also send in suggestions if possible.

Meeting wrap-up and close

114. The Chair shared some closing reflections, expressing appreciation for the collaborative spirit in which CGIAR's teams and wider stakeholders are addressing both evolving global challenges alongside the transition to operating as an integrated, even more impactful CGIAR.
115. Recognizing the intense work involved in making all the progress that has been achieved over the 2022 year, he encouraged sustained cooperation to ensure the continuation and acceleration of that progress – essential now more than ever given the rapidly evolving global crisis.
116. The meeting was closed.

Annex 1: Participant List

Meeting Leadership		Key: (* *) indicates that voting member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by the alternate (* **) indicated that voting member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by another delegated representative	
Chair: Juergen Voegele Co-Chair: Andrew Campbell (Australia)			
System Council Voting Members (listed alphabetically)	Member representative	Member Alternates & Other Delegation Members	
Australia	Andrew Campbell	Alternate: Julianne Biddle Other delegates: Eleanor Dean	
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Ruben Echeverria	Alternate: Renee Lafitte Other delegates: Rinn Self	
Canada	Flora Mak*	Alternate: Santiago Alba Corral	
East Asia & Pacific	Hao Weiping (China)	Alternate: Fadry Djufrj (Indonesia) Other delegates: Yudi Sastro, Nuning Argo Subekti, Suhartini	
European Commission	Christophe Larose		
Germany & Belgium	Felicitas Röhrig**	Other delegates: Sarah Schmidt	
Japan	Akiko Tejima (v) <i>Day 1 - except for Agenda item 5</i>	Alternate: Takuma Kojima Other delegates: Masa Iwanaga, Satoru Muranaka	
Latin America and Caribbean	Pedro Machado (Brazil)	Alternate: Jorge Mario Diaz Luengas (Colombia) Other delegates: Renee Janette Pacheco Santos (Peru)	
Mexico	Adriana Herrera-Moreno (v) Day 1	Alternate: Juan Bernardo Orozco (v)	
The Netherlands	Timmo Gaasbeek (v)**		
South Asia	Himanshu Pathak (India)	Alternate Member - S.M. Bokhtiar (Bangladesh)	
Sub-Saharan Africa	Garba Sharubutu (Nigeria)	Alternate - Eliud Kireger (Kenya) Other delegate: Carolyne Minayo (Kenya)	
Sweden	AnnaKarin Norling		
Switzerland	Manfred Kaufmann		
United Kingdom	Alan Tollervey		
United States of America	Rob Bertram	Alternate: Jerry Glover	
West Asia & North Africa	Fatma Sarsu (Türkiye)**	Alternate: Tooraj Valinassab (Iran)	
The World Bank	Martien Van Nieuwkoop		
Non-voting Ex-officio members		Other Delegates	
CGIAR System Board	Marco Ferroni (Chair)	Alyssa Jade McDonald-Baertl, Lindiwe Majele Sibanda (System Board Members)	
Executive Director of the CGIAR System Organization	Khuloud Odeh		
Center/Alliance Representative 1: Convener of the Chairs of Center Boards of Trustees	Elsa Murano (v) Day 1 only		
Center/Alliance Representative 2: Convener of the Center Directors General	Jean Balié		
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Ismahane Elouafi Day 2 only		
Active Observers		Alternate & Other Delegates	
Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)	Ravi Khetarpal	Alternate: Hildegard Lingnau	
CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)	Holger Meinke (Chair)	Other delegates: Nompumelelo (Mpumi) Obokoh - ISDC Vice Chair, Fetien Abera - ISDC Member	
SC Secretary			
Karmen Bennett, Global Director, Governance & Assurance (a.i.)			
Invited guests		Representative	
Host Country of the CGIAR System Organization (France)	Bernard Hubert & Jean Albergel		
Chair of CGIAR's Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)	Karen Macours		
Trustee of the CGIAR Trust Fund (World Bank)	Jane Mwebi (v)		

Meeting Summary: 17th System Council Meeting

Additional Participants	Name/Role/Organization
SC Chair adviser	Jonathan Wadsworth, Lead Agriculture Specialist, Agriculture and Food Global Practice, World Bank
CGIAR's Executive Managing Director	Claudia Sadoff
CGIAR personnel	Elwyn Grainger-Jones, Managing Director, Institutional Strategy and Systems
	Harold Roy-Macauley, Managing Director, Regions and Partnership, CGIAR (v, agenda item 4)
	Lotte Pang, Managing Director, Communications and Outreach
	Sonja Vermeulen, Managing Director, Genetic Innovation
	Andre Zandstra, Global Director of Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization
	Fiona Bourdin-Farrell, Global Director, People & Culture, CGIAR (v, agenda items 1-8)
	Marion Barriskell, Global Director of Business Operations and Finance
	Selim Guvener, CGIAR Group General Counsel (a.i.)
	Andrew Giddings, Director, CGIAR Ethics and Business Conduct unit (v, agenda item 8)
	Roland Sundstrom, Senior Advisor
CGIAR System Council Secretariat	Emma Quilligan, CGIAR System Council Support
	Sylvia Oyinlola, CGIAR System Council Support
CGIAR's Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service	Director, Allison Grove Smith; ISDC Lead, Amy Beaudreault (v, agenda items 9-13)
Secretary of EIARD (European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development)	Nienke Beintema
Event support	
	Victoria Pezzi, Meeting and Events Coordinator, CGIAR System Organization
	Isabelle Osman, Portfolio Performance Administrator, CGIAR System Organization