

Chair's Summary¹
20th System Council meeting
Brasília, Brazil, 12-13 June 2024

Dear System Council Members, Active Observers, and invited guests,

From hunger and malnutrition to healthy food and climate resilience, key global trends are moving in the wrong direction. Recent heatwaves in several regions – with direct impacts on human health as well as food production and security – remind us of the scale and urgency of the challenges we face.

The work that CGIAR does alongside its partners is critical in helping billions of people cope with these adverse trends. We need to double down. We need to deliver impactful and relevant research and innovations faster where they are needed the most. CGIAR must reach and remain ahead of the curve on our biggest global challenges.

Against this backdrop, I was delighted that Embrapa agreed to host the 20th meeting of the System Council at its headquarters in Brasília. For decades, Brazil has been a global leader in the fight against hunger, poverty, and inequality. This year, through its G20 Presidency, Brazil is placing these topics front and center on the global agenda – working closely with CGIAR and other partners.

Adding to the significance of the moment, Embrapa and CGIAR signed a Memorandum of Understanding to deepen their collaboration in a range of areas. This is exactly what the world needs and provides a template for enhanced partnership with other, major national and regional research and innovation actors and systems.

I want to thank Dr. Silvia Massruha, President of Embrapa, and her entire team for the warm welcome and hospitality; and Dr. Pedro Machado for ably guiding our proceedings as my Co-Chair.

It was also my pleasure to welcome Dr. Ismahane Elouafi and Mr. Guillaume Grosso at their first System Council meeting as Executive Managing Director (EMD) and Deputy EMD, respectively.

In her opening reflections, the System Board Chair, Prof. Lindiwe Majele Sibanda provided an overview of the progress made and way forward across the Board's priority areas of science and innovation in partnership, funding and finance, people and organizational structure, and governance; and noted that the finish line of our governance transition was now within touching distance. The System Board was also represented by its Vice Chair, Dr. Patrick Caron,

¹ The Chair's Summary is prepared as an early record of key messages and decisions taken, in advance of the more detailed formal meeting summary that will be shared for System Council input and approval.

as well as Dr. Shenggen Fan.

As a key outcome of our meeting, the System Council endorsed CGIAR's 2025—30 Portfolio Narrative and provided important guidance towards the next phase of the Portfolio design process. Council members welcomed the ambition of a Portfolio that encompasses all of CGIAR's work, across all Centers and all sources of funding; and the clear, coherent, and consolidated offer set out in the Narrative. Council members further underscored the importance of putting in place the appropriate governance, management, and funding arrangements to ensure effective and efficient implementation, with strong collaboration, transparency, and accountability.

Council members appreciated the Independent Science for Development Council's (ISDC) feedback on the Narrative and encouraged management to carefully consider it in the next phase of work. While the Council did not align with ISDC's recommendation to merge the Sustainable Farming and Multifunctional Landscapes Programs, it welcomed the invitation to ensure strong complementarity and coordination across the two. Gender equality and social inclusion as well as nutrition and health were identified among critical, cross-cutting priorities that needed to be clearly reflected and intentionally addressed throughout the Portfolio; and additional attention to water as well as trees and agroforestry was encouraged.

Underpinning CGIAR's science and innovations, the Council heard substantive updates on the implementation of the new, integrated governance arrangements approved in December 2023.

The Council welcomed the efforts of its Nominations Committee towards the identification and appointment of a diverse, high-caliber Integrated Partnership Board (IPB). The Council approved the Committee's revised timeline of next steps and looked forward to taking final appointment decisions in July 2024.

As it prepares to appoint the IPB, the Council recognized the need for transparency and clarity on the responsibilities, accountabilities, and authorities of the new Board. To that end, Council members welcomed the joint System Council-System Board Working Group on the respective roles of the Integrated Partnership Board and the System Council.

Beyond governance roles and responsibilities, the Council took note of the work of the ICI (Integrated, Coordinated, Independent) Forum. Consistent with the approved *CGIAR memorandum on the implementation of governance recommendations* and informed by the Assurance Oversight Committee's report, the Council called for accelerated progress towards the integration of internal audit, external audit, and ethics and business conduct by end-2024; and for the addition of internal controls and risk management among the Forum's priorities for integration.

The Council reaffirmed its commitment to gender equality, diversity, and inclusion (GDI) as core values underpinning all aspects of CGIAR's work. Council members appreciated updates on GDI across CGIAR's workplaces and research Portfolio and expressed strong support towards the proposed Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator.

As an essential step towards operationalizing the new 2025—30 Portfolio, the Council welcomed the proposal of the Financial Model Reference Group as a pragmatic way forward. Council members provided feedback on options for ensuring more sustainable and predictable financing of CGIAR's strategic assets and looked forward to the finalization of the assets study later this year.

In view of launching the next research and innovation Portfolio in 2025, the Council took stock of CGIAR's resource mobilization ambitions and strategy. Council members recognized the importance of further diversifying CGIAR's funding base towards new and innovative sources of funding.

The Council extended a warm welcome to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), represented by HE Mariam Almheiri, at its first System Council meeting as a voting member. UAE restated its pledge made at COP28 to invest in CGIAR, with \$30 million in funding for the entire CGIAR portfolio and another \$50 million for various programs and initiatives over the 2024-2027 period.

The coming six months will be critical for finalizing the design of CGIAR's next Portfolio; putting in place the critical governance, management, and funding enablers for delivery; and launching the concerted resource mobilization, communications, and advocacy effort to drive growth. With this ambitious agenda in front of us, we thank Germany for agreeing to host us and look forward to our next, 21st meeting in Berlin in December.

Yours sincerely,

Juergen Voegelé, Ph.D.
Chair, System Council

Appendix 1 – Decisions taken and Agreed positions and actions

DECISIONS

SC20-DP1 – Appointment of meeting Co-Chair

The System Council appointed Dr. Pedro Luiz Oliveira de Almeida Machado, System Council alternate member representing Brazil as the non-voting Co-Chair for the 20th System Council meeting, pursuant to Article 5.2 of the CGIAR System Framework.

SC20-DP2 – Adoption of the agenda

The System Council adopted the Agenda, as re-issued on 9 June 2024.

SC20-DP3 – Endorsement of the CGIAR 2025-30 Portfolio Narrative

The System Council endorsed the CGIAR 2025-30 Portfolio Narrative as the set of strategic priorities for CGIAR Research and Innovation, pursuant to Article 6.1 a) iii. of the CGIAR System Framework; and provided guidance to inform the next phase of design of the Portfolio.

SC20-DP4 – Decision taken in closed session

The System Council approved the utilization of the Liquidity and Stabilization Fund for the completion of the One CGIAR transition process in support of the CGIAR 2025-30 Portfolio, up to a ceiling of US\$ 8 million. As a matter of record, the System Council's decision was taken in closed session, pursuant to the powers of the Council set out in Article 7.9 of the CGIAR System Framework.

SC20-DP5 – Membership of the Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)

The System Council approved the:

- Extension of Dr. Sujata Visaria as SPIA Member for an additional three-year term with effect from 1 July 2024;
- Extension of Dr. Monica Biradavolu as SPIA Member for an additional three-year term with effect from 1 July 2024;
- Appointment of Dr. Jennifer Burney as SPIA Member for an initial three-year term with effect from 1 July 2024;
- Appointment of Dr. Susan Godlonton as SPIA Member for an initial three-year term with effect from 1 July 2024; and
- Appointment of Dr. Jenny Aker as SPIA Member for an initial three-year term with effect from 1 July 2024.

SC20-DP6 – System Council Leadership

The System Council approved the appointment of Dr. Juergen Voegelé as Chair of the System Council for a third term of two-years with effect from 12 July 2024.

SC20-DP7 – Membership of the Independent Science for Development Council

The System Council approved the reappointment of Dr. Magali Garcia as an ISDC member for a three-year term with effect from 1 July 2024.

AGREED POSITIONS AND ACTIONS

SC20-AP1 – Requests to the Nominations Committee of the System Council

The System Council requested the Nominations Committee of the System Council to:

- Operate in accordance with its proposed, revised timeline for decision-making on Integrated Partnership Board (IPB) membership, including:
 - a revised delivery date of a slate of IPB nominees of Monday 22 July 2024; and
 - a proposal to convene a virtual, extraordinary System Council meeting session to decide on the slate of nominees, on Wednesday, 24 July 2024; and
- Proceed with the selection of an external firm to be contracted by the System Organization in line with its procurement and contracting policies to review the remuneration (honorarium) of the Integrated Partnership Board members.

SC20-AP2 – Risk and oversight integration action plan

The System Council, with a shared vision for the future of CGIAR as an integrated partnership, underscores the critical and urgent need for the integration of the following functions across the System: Internal Controls & Risk Management, Internal Audit, External Audit, and Ethics & Business Conduct. Integration of these functions is a key step that needs to be undertaken before the end of December 2024.

The internal audit function, in particular, must be independent from management, in line with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditor.

The System Council asks the EMD, working with the ICI Forum, to submit a time-bound risk and oversight integration action plan on internal audit, external audit and ethics & business conduct to the System Board by 24 July 2024. The Council further asks the System Board to review and approve the action plan and submit it to the System Council for decision by 31 July 2024. The Council asks the Integrated Partnership Board (once appointed) to report on progress of the implementation of the Action Plan by the System as a whole and by individual Centers by the end of September 2024 and at each of its System Council meetings starting in December 2024.

The internal controls & risk function will be added to the ICI Forum priorities to complement the work on internal audit, external audit and ethics & business conduct. The System Council asks the EMD, working with the ICI Forum, to submit an updated risk and oversight integration action plan that incorporates the internal controls & risk management aspects to the IPB by the end of October 2024. The IPB will submit this action plan for decision by the System Council at its December 2024 meeting.