



Meeting Summary¹
General Assembly of Centers
5th Meeting, 14 February 2024, Virtual

Agenda Item 1 – Meeting Opening

1. The Convener of the Center Board Chairs, Elsa Murano, welcomed participants to the meeting, and confirmed quorum.
2. **Decision:** The Convener of the Center Board Chairs sought and received agreement from the GAC for Mark Smith, DG of IWMI, to serve as Co-Chair of the meeting alongside Elsa Murano.
3. It was recognized that this meeting represents the first convening of the General Assembly of Centers ('GAC') since August 2020, following the agreement to reactivate the GAC as an outcome of 2023's unified governance review process.
4. The Convener of the Center Board Chairs introduced the Provisional Agenda, highlighting key topics on which the GAC's agreement was required on a time-sensitive basis, specifically: i) on its own Co-Conveners for 2024 who also represent the Centers on the CGIAR System Council²; and ii) select the GAC's three nominees to the Integrated Partnership Board ('IPB') Nominations Committee, for final appointment by the System Council.
5. **Decision:** The Provisional Agenda was adopted.

Setting the Scene – overview of the process of implementation of the integrated governance recommendations

6. The Deputy Executive Managing Director, Guillaume Grosso, provided an overview of the process of implementation of the proposals set out in the CGIAR Memorandum on the implementation of governance recommendations ('the Memorandum')³. He highlighted that a detailed implementation plan including steps to deliver these, planned roles and timings has been developed, including three high-priority workstreams:

¹ Summary approved on a no objection basis with effect from 5 March 2024.

² The CGIAR System Framework provides in Article 3.1 b) v. that two representatives to be appointed by the Centers serve on the System Council as ex-officio non-voting members.

³ <https://storage.googleapis.com/cgiarorg/2024/01/CGIAR-memorandum-governance-recs-APPROVED.pdf>

- i. The Integrated Partnership Board nominations process;
 - ii. The 'ICI' (which functions should be integrated, coordinated or left independent) – which will be DG-led, with the AFRC overseeing aspects of integrations of functions that report directly to it; and
 - iii. Governing instrument changes, to be developed by a Governance Working Group.
7. The Deputy Executive Managing Director introduced the membership and role of the Governance Working Group, noting that its membership is drawn from all IFA Parties and the System Council and brings expertise in legal and governance as well as Center operations. The group will provide technical drafting support to key workstreams, and will report on progress to a Sounding Board group, who will also provide guidance on questions or issues arising. It was confirmed that a 'dashboard' overview document is being finalized and will be shared shortly with stakeholders to provide transparency on roles, responsibilities, timelines and progress.
8. The Convener of the Center Board Chairs emphasized the time-sensitive nature of the IPB Nominations Process to ensure that the IPB itself can be reconstituted by mid-April and Centers can appoint two of its members to their own boards shortly thereafter.
9. It was confirmed that the Alliance has two representatives on the Governance Working Group as it remains two legal entities. A suggestion was also made that the System Organization select one representative rather than have a rotating seat⁴.

Agenda Item 2 – Nominations Process for the Integrated Partnership Board

10. The Convener of the Center Board Chairs recalled that the GAC is asked to identify three members for the Integrated Partnership Board Nominations Committee ('IPB NC'). She advised that four nominations had been received (as shared in the advance read, circulated prior to the meeting).
11. At the Convener's request, those who had submitted the nominations shared their views on why each nominee is felt to be a strong candidate.
12. **Action agreed (AP1):** Each Center (via the Board Chair, except in cases where the Chair is a nominee) was requested to share their preferred three nominees via email to the Convener with copy to the GAC Secretariat.⁵
13. It was noted that in addition to the GAC's three nominees, the IPB NC's membership will also include three members from CGIAR's host countries (one each from the

⁴ Subsequent to the meeting, the System Organization's member of the working group was confirmed as Elise Perset, Director, Legal.

⁵ Subsequent to the meeting, the following results of the voting were confirmed by email to the GAC on 15 February: The following three persons were selected by majority vote to be put forward for appointment by the System Council as the three members nominated by the General Assembly of Centers on the IPB Nominations Committee: **Dr Akiça Bahri; Prof. Helen Hambly Odame; Dr. Kanayo F. Nwanze.**

Americas, Asia and Africa). Directors General had been asked to liaise with their host countries to seek nominations, which were received from each region – including three nominations from host countries in Asia.

14. Following consultation with the DGs of the respective Centers, it was proposed that the System Council be asked to make the final selection among nominees for host country seats where there is more than one per region and that communication of the result is then sent on behalf of the Council to the respective nominees. GAC members were supportive of this approach.
15. It was noted by two GAC members that the SC is anticipated to take into consideration diversity considerations across the full membership of the IPB NC (rather than within each category).

Agenda Item 3 – General Assembly of Centers matters

16. The Convener of the Center Board Chairs noted that following the unified governance review, and its recommendation that the GAC be reactivated, there is a need to update the GAC's Terms of Reference/Rules of Procedure, aligned to required changes in the Charter of the System Organization, to reflect the revised role of the GAC.
17. It was proposed that the Governance Working Group discuss and prepare a draft Terms of Reference as part of its work on aligning all governing instruments to the Memorandum, for the GAC to consider. GAC members were in agreement with this approach.
18. The Convener of the Center Board Chairs advised that the GAC also needs to elect respective Conveners of the Board Chairs and the Directors General for 2024. The role involves chairing the GAC as well as serving as the Centers' two representatives on the System Council.
19. It was noted that those with terms expiring on or after 31 December 2024 would be eligible for nomination, and that given the time commitment involved, potential candidates should be consulted on their availability to serve in the role prior to nomination.
20. **Action agreed (AP2)**: Center Board Chairs were requested to provide nominations for a Board Chair to serve in the Convener role for 2024 to Elsa Murano by close of business on Monday 19 February (based on a list of Board Chairs whose terms expire on or after 31 December 2024, to be circulated by the Secretariat.)
21. **Action agreed (AP3)**: Center Directors General will confer and agree on a Convener for 2024⁶.

⁶ Subsequent to the meeting, it was confirmed that Mark Smith, DG of IWMI, will continue to serve as Convener of the DGs for 2024.

22. The Convener of the Center Board Chairs invited inputs on the proposed cadence of GAC meetings for the coming year. Several GAC members commented that in the near-term, monthly meetings would be useful given the time-sensitive work needed on IPB and Center Board membership reconstitution – and the GAC could reflect later in the year on whether this cadence remains the right one. It was noted that when last active, the GAC met annually.
23. **Action agreed (AP4)**: Monthly GAC meetings will be scheduled for the first half of 2024.
24. The EMD confirmed that CGIAR Science Week is planned for 1-15 July 2024 in Nairobi, and suggested that the GAC could meet alongside that event.
25. The urgency of the IPB nominations process was emphasized, with two Board Chairs sounding caution that the planned time frame of selection by mid-April may not be realistic and that a communication to the System Council on the risk around the time frame may be useful. The System Board Chair confirmed that the Sounding Board and the team involved in implementation of the process are focused on ensuring that the planned deadlines are met.
26. A request was made that Center Board Secretaries be copied on matters relating to the GAC to support Board Chairs in their participation. It was agreed that this will be done systematically going forward. It was also requested and confirmed that for future meetings, materials including required decisions will be shared at least one week in advance.
27. **Action agreed (AP5)**: A request was made for an induction (on a virtual basis) on the GAC to be provided.
28. The meeting Co-Chairs thanked participants and closed the meeting.

Follow-up actions agreed and status

Action #	Action	Owner	Target Date	Status
GAC/M5/AP1	Each Center (via the Board Chair, except in cases where the Chair is a nominee) was requested to share their preferred three nominees via email to the Convener with copy to the GAC Secretariat.	Center Board Chairs supported by the Secretariat	16 February 2024	Completed – results communicated to the GAC on 15 February
GAC/M5/AP2	Center Board Chairs were requested to provide nominations for a Board Chairs to serve in the Convener role for 2024 to Elsa Murano by close of business on Monday 19 February (based on a list of Board Chairs whose terms expire on or after 31 December 2024, to be circulated by the Secretariat.)	Secretariat; Center Board Chairs	19 February 2024	Completed
GAC/M5/AP3	Center Directors General will confer and agree on a Convener for 2024	Directors General	19 February 2024	Completed
GAC/M5/AP4	Monthly GAC meetings will be scheduled for the first half of 2024.	Secretariat In consultation with Co-Conveners	Early-March 2024	In progress – proposed dates to be discussed with new Co-Conveners once selected.
GAC/M5/AP5	A request was made for an induction (on a virtual basis) on the GAC to be provided.	Secretariat In consultation with Co-Conveners	Q1 2024	A proposed approach for this will be discussed and developed with the new Conveners, once selected.

Annex 1 - Participation

Members of the General Assembly

Center	Role	Name
AfricaRice	Board Chair	Kanayo F. Nwanze
AfricaRice	Director General	Baboucarr Manneh
Alliance of Bioversity International & CIAT	Board Chair	Julia Marton-Lefèvre
Alliance of Bioversity International & CIAT	Director General	Juan Lucas Restrepo
CIFOR-ICRAF	Board Chair	Doris Capistrano
CIFOR-ICRAF	CEO (and DG of ICRAF)	Éliane Ubalijoro
CIFOR-ICRAF	Director General (CIFOR)	Robert Nasi
CIMMYT	Director General	Bram Govaerts
CIP	Board Chair	Helen Hambly
CIP	Director General	Simon Heck
ICARDA	Board Chair	Neal Gutterson
ICARDA	Director General	Aly Abousabaa
ICRISAT	Director General	Jacqueline Hughes
IFPRI	Director General	Jo Swinnen
IITA	Board Chair	Roel Merckx
IITA	Director General	Simeon Ehui
ILRI	Board Chair	Elsa Murano (Convener of the Center Board Chairs Network and Meeting Co-Chair)
ILRI	Director General	Appolinaire Djikeng
IRRI	Board Chair	Cao Đức Phát
IWMI	Board Chair	Simi Kamal
IWMI	Director General	Mark Smith (Meeting Co-Chair)
WorldFish	Board Chair	Yusuf Abubakar
WorldFish	Director General	Essam Mohammed

Apologies

Center	Role	Name
CIMMYT	Board Chair	Margaret Bath
ICRISAT	Board Chair	Prabhu Pingali
IFPRI	Board Chair	Pascal Lamy
IRRI	Director General	Ajay Kohli (a.i.)

Invited Guests

Role	Name
System Board Chair	Lindiwe Majele Sibanda
Executive Managing Director	Ismahane Elouafi
Deputy Executive Managing Director	Guillaume Grosso
Governance Working Group Chair	Rutger de Witt Wijnen, Global General Counsel
Secretary to the System Council	Sylvia Oyinlola, Global Head, System Council Support

Secretariat and Meeting Support

Role	Name
Secretariat to the GAC	Olwen Cussen, Governance Officer

Summary – General Assembly of Centers, 5th Meeting

Virtual Meeting Management	Victoria Pezzi, Meetings & Events Coordinator
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