

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS AND FUTURE LOCATION FOR IBPGR

Progress Report
of the IBPGR Board of Trustees
to the CGIAR Mid-Term Meeting
in Canberra - May 1989

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I appreciate the opportunity for reporting on the IBPGR Board's progress on moving toward a solution for long term arrangements for IBPGR. As my predecessor Dr Peacock reported to the Group a year ago at the Berlin meeting, the Board's plan was to prepare a report for consideration at ICW this fall. We are making progress in the preparation of that report. Our report today, I wish to emphasize, is a progress report not the final report and hence it is presented for your information. Your comments will be helpful to the Board.

THE ISSUE

The basic issue is to develop a stable arrangement for the administration and location of the headquarters of IBPGR and to accomplish this as quickly as possible.

In the external review of IBPGR in 1985, major changes were suggested for both the program and organisation of the Center. And then the CGIAR, the Board and FAO grappled with the question of whether the Center could carry out the revised and expanded program most effectively within the administrative framework of FAO or whether IBPGR should evolve to a fully autonomous Center at that time. While these discussions took place, Center staff vacancies were frozen for 18 months, Program changes were delayed, staff morale was low, and implementation of the IBPGR program suffered. The outcome of the discussions was that FAO changed the administrative status of IBPGR to that of an FAO Field Project. This provided the Center with the maximum flexibility possible within the FAO structure.

The CGIAR lifted the freeze on hiring staff in May 1986. By the summer of 1989, the full complement of staff will be in place for the first time.

Last year at the mid-year meeting when the IBPGR five year program and budget plan was presented you had an opportunity to see the Center as it currently exists: its program, its size and its organisational structure.

The issue of how the Center should be administered and where it should be located arose for the second time within three years at the February 1988 meeting of the Board. At that time a Memorandum of Understanding between IBPGR and FAO covering administrative arrangements, was reviewed. As a consequence FAO notified the Board that in light of the situation in FAO, the Director-General had reluctantly agreed to extend the agreement with IBPGR until December 1990. We were advised, however, that IBPGR would be requested to reimburse FAO for all its expenses and that, at that stage, FAO could make no commitment on the availability of extra space for IBPGR on FAO premises.

The Board does not want to see the Center damaged by a second prolonged period of instability and uncertainty within a three year period. Hence the Board undertook a study of the issue. We had to move quickly to retain the momentum of the IBPGR programs and the enthusiasm of the staff. Our goal was to arrive at a solution that would settle the issue to the satisfaction of all concerned, including the developing countries, the CGIAR, the Center staff and FAO.

SHORT TERM ARRANGEMENTS

FAO did not have the additional space needed in 1989 to accommodate the staff of IBPGR. The Center staff and Board felt that it was inefficient and disruptive of programs to have part of the staff in the FAO building and part in another location. Therefore, with the excellent assistance of FAO, space was located in Rome and the Center will move to this new location in July. The arrangement is that FAO has rented the space and IBPGR will pay the full rental cost and all other associated costs.

This arrangement is viewed by the Board as a temporary one permitting the Center to keep its programs operational and efficient until a long term solution is effected.

LONG TERM ARRANGEMENTS

The main criteria under consideration by the Board for evaluation of the possible options are the following:

- stability of administrative arrangements
- conditions to attract and retain highly qualified scientists and support staff
- opportunity to strengthen IBPGR's identity

- opportunity to continue effective interaction with FAO
- opportunity to continue effective interaction with developing countries
- proximity to scientific institutions including access to major library resources
- ability to support outposted offices and field-based activities
- excellent and reliable communication and travel infrastructure
- cost implications
- improved ability to attract strong and continuing financial support

After carefully weighing the advantages and disadvantages of operating under the administrative umbrella of FAO the Board concluded that administrative separation would be preferable at this time. We will recommend this to the CGIAR in our report at ICW 1989. The Board views this as a natural evolution to meet the needs of IBPGR for the future and correspondence from the Director-General of FAO to the Chairman of the CGIAR indicates that he shares this view.

The Board has tried to keep donors fully informed of the thinking and progress in the study. At the May 1988 mid-year meeting in Berlin, Dr Peacock informed the group that:

"The Board of Trustees has initiated a study to determine which of several options would be best for future operations of IBPGR central facility, within the FAO structure or moving IBPGR to a different location, perhaps associated with a botanical research institute or other of the CGIAR institutes."

Following an Executive Committee meeting in July 1988, Dr Peacock sent a letter to each member of the Group enclosing a copy of the Executive Committee meeting minutes. These indicated that a wide range of options were under consideration including separation from FAO and moving to other locations including other countries.

By November the Board had reached the point in the study where it wished to consult with the donors to IBPGR. A letter was therefore sent by the Board Chairman to each of the donors inviting them to a special meeting of the Board. The letter stated;

"As you will know from the CGIAR meeting in Berlin in May 1988 and my subsequent letter to you, the IBPGR Executive Committee has constituted itself as a task force to examine the future Headquarters' arrangements for the center.

The Board of Trustees will be meeting at FAO HQ in Rome 22-24 February 1989 and the task force will be reporting on its work.

We have agreed to set aside the full morning of 23 February for a discussion with donors so that we can have a full and frank exchange of views before the Board finalizes its preference. Accordingly I hope that you, or a representative, will note this date in your diary and make all efforts to help IBPGR in its decision making."

In addition a special letter dated December 1 1988 was sent by the Chairman of the Board to officials of Italy, Denmark and Switzerland asking the following:

"In the event that IBPGR decides to separate its organisational base from that contracted to FAO, or in the event that FAO can no longer house IBPGR, I would like to know if your country would consider hosting IBPGR."

At the February 1989 Board meeting a half day session was devoted to a discussion with the donor representatives to obtain their views. The discussion was very helpful to the Board. Later in the meeting, a motion

was passed to accept an offer from Denmark conditionally. This offer was timely and met most of the criteria laid down. The condition was that "mutually acceptable arrangements can be put in place". This motion provided guidance to the Executive Committee in continuing the study and in the preparing the recommendation to the CGIAR. It is understood that the Board will make a firm recommendation to the CGIAR and that the CGIAR will make a final decision.

The remaining consideration is to finalize the choice of the best location for the headquarters. It is important to recognise that it is the location of the headquarters only that is under consideration. The IBPGR offices in the developing countries will not be affected.

The Executive Committee met again on May 29 and 30 in Canberra. We reviewed carefully the decisions taken previously and reconfirmed our view that a location in Europe would be the most advantageous for the effective operation of the Center.

We examined all the options now before us - the offer of Denmark, an offer from Switzerland, one from the City of Montpellier in France, and the possibility recently reaffirmed by the Italian Government, of our remaining in Rome. Going back to our criteria and comparing these four specific locations, we have reached the conclusion that Copenhagen and Rome are the two most attractive options although all four are potentially

satisfactory. Denmark has made a firm offer inviting us to Copenhagen and has provided some financial incentives. The Board is continuing its negotiations with Denmark to see whether mutually satisfactory arrangements could be worked out. We are also taking steps to obtain further details of the offer from Italy.

The expectation is that we will be in a position to finalize the report with our recommendation by September 1 for circulation to ICW 1989.

SUMMARY

In summary the Board's goal is to provide IBPGR with the best possible administrative and location arrangements for carrying out its mandate over the next 2-3 decades.

We will be recommending an administratively autonomous Center. The Board would prefer the IPBGR headquarters to be located in Copenhagen or in Rome.

A move would involve the headquarters only. The seven IBPGR offices in the regions would not be moved; they will remain in developing countries where they can best serve those countries. IBPGR's program would not be affected by relocation of the headquarters.

The new arrangements will be planned carefully and introduced in a way that will avoid interruption to programs and minimize disruption to staff and their families. A Memorandum of Understanding will be developed between IBPGR and FAO to ensure that strong collaboration is maintained.

The Board would welcome further comments from CGIAR members at this meeting to assist us in finalizing our report.