

# **Report of the First Meeting of the Global Forum Steering Committee**

**May 24 and 25, 1997, Cairo, Egypt**

*The inaugural meeting of the Global Forum Steering Committee under the framework of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research was held at the Mena House Oberoi Hotel, Cairo, Egypt on May 24 and 25, 1997. The list of participants is attached.*

## **1. Introduction**

The meeting was chaired by Dr. William Dar of the Philippines and APAARI in behalf of Dr. Fernando Chaparro who sent his regrets. Dr. Chaparro, Chair of the NARS Global Steering Committee was unable to participate because of an urgent official task which requires his full attention. He requested Dr. Dar, who has been involved in all NARS meetings and consultations leading to the Global Forum at ICW96, to take his place as the convenor of the meeting. Another regional forum leader, Dr. Maurice Onanga, Chairman of the newly created Forum on Agricultural Research for Africa (FARA) also sent his regrets.

After a brief introduction of the participants, the agenda were adopted as presented.

## **2. Mandate and Functions of GFSC**

Considerable time was spent in discussing and clarifying the mandate and functions of the GFSC. It was emphasized that the Committee should be guided by the Global Forum Declaration and the Plan of Action. The primary objective of the Global Forum is to develop and enhance partnerships among stakeholders in the emerging global agricultural research system. Such partnerships are essential in addressing, through research, the global challenges of alleviating poverty, increasing agricultural productivity and resource use efficiency, and preventing environmental degradation.

The Committee is mandated by the Global Forum participants to translate the Plan of Action into program of activities. It serves as the primary mechanism for facilitating and coordinating the implementation of the Plan. Its tasks are to:

- promote a global framework for agricultural research
- foster research partnership and collaboration

- contribute to the strengthening of the NARS and regional/subregional fora
- encourage the identification of collaborative projects through suitable mechanisms including regional/subregional fora

In carrying out its functions, the Committee will rely on suitable and cost-effective mechanisms for interaction and information exchange.

Convening of the Global Forum every three years is a primary responsibility of the Committee. The Global Forum will review the progress that has been made and identify areas of future work.

### **3. Committee's Composition**

The meeting participants reviewed the composition of the Global Forum Steering Committee (GFSC). A distinction was made between the NARS Global Steering Committee (NARS GSC) and the GFSC. The NARS GSC was formed by the NARS regional fora chairs held in Rome, Italy on August 28-29, 1996. The creation of the GFSC, on the other hand, was mandated in the plan of action of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research held during ICW96. The NARS GSC is a committee composed of NARS leaders of the regional fora while the GFSC comprises various components and stakeholders of the global agricultural research system.

The meeting reaffirmed the membership of the following key stakeholders in the GFSC:

- a. NARS Regional fora chairs (5)
- b. Advanced research institutions/ Universities (3)
- c. NGO (1)
- d. Farmers' organization (1)
- e. Private sector (1)
- f. International Agricultural Research Centers (1)
- g. Donor Group (1)

The present representations are considered interim and the importance of a process of legitimization is fully recognized.

It is also envisaged that a donor support group would be organized to enhance and support the activities agreed upon by the GFSC.

The Committee's chairmanship will be rotated among the regional fora chairs. A chair will serve for a period of one year. His/her successor will automatically serve as the vice-chair during his/her term. This system of

succession, along with a permanent secretariat, will help ensure continuity in the Committee.

#### **4. Secretariat Services and Operational Support**

##### **4.1 GFSC Secretariat**

The Committee emphasized the importance of establishing and maintaining a secretariat that will serve as the primary mechanism through which its work program is implemented. As pointed out earlier, the secretariat has a critical role of ensuring continuity in the Committee's operation.

Various options on the location of the secretariat were identified. The NARS representatives pointed out the need for the NARS Global Steering Committee to have a secretariat which is separate from that of the GFSC secretariat. After an extensive discussion and analysis of the various options, the Committee reached a consensus to recommend that the GFSC have its secretariat in the World Bank-ESDAR in Washington, D.C.

##### **4.2 NARS GSC Secretariat**

The members of the NARS GSC expressed their desire to locate its secretariat at IFAD in Rome. They also expressed their intention of maintaining the secretariat as an autonomous entity within the host institution and be driven by the NARS GSC composed of regional fora chairs.

Following the discussion, it was recognized that, considering FAO's and ISNAR's mandates and the continuous support they provide to the regional fora, they could also be considered as possible hosts for the NARS GSC secretariat.

The GFSC acknowledged the various possibilities and suggested that the three agencies develop a mechanism to jointly sponsor the NARS GSC secretariat in full consultation with the members of the NARS GSC. It was clarified, however, that the activities of the committee will need support from other donors as well.

##### **4.3 Relative Roles of the Two Secretariats**

The scope of work and responsibilities of the two secretariats are basically defined by the roles and functions of their respective committees. The NARS GSC is devoted to activities that will develop and enhance partnerships among NARS within and between regional fora (NARS-NARS partnership). The

GFSC, on the other hand, will focus on activities or programs that expand partnerships between NARS and the other actors in the global research community.

## **5. Proposed Activities/Work Program of the GFSC**

The GFSC agreed to undertake the following initial activities/projects:

a. Enhancement of exchange of information (on technologies, research projects database, research institutions, researchers/scientists, etc.). This will minimize duplication of efforts.

b. A platform for the discussion of generic agricultural research issues that are of global interest but may not be adequately covered in other fora (e.g. sustainability issues, biodiversity, biotechnology, research management questions, strengthening partnerships and alliances, etc. )

A concept note on the establishment/installation of an electronic global forum on agricultural research (EGFAR) was presented by Selcuk Ozgediz of the CGIAR Secretariat. It was an idea that was conceived at the time of the Global Forum and fleshed out through the help of the ESSD information technology staff of the World Bank. Operating through the internet, EGFAR would provide a setting that enables the participants to continuously explore the needs and opportunities for agricultural research, scope of collaboration, and practical measures to strengthen partnerships. EGFAR is intended to complement other mechanisms for interaction and not replace them.

The Committee endorsed the proposal and asked that the next steps be taken to move forward on this project. A full demonstration is planned for ICW97.

c. Monitoring of research partnerships and case analyses of successful ones

The knowledge that will be gained from the studies will help in the design of future collaborative projects. Some on-going collaborative projects involving the NGOs, farmers organizations, NARS, and IARCs have been identified as possible subjects of case analyses.

d. Support to NARS, subregional and regional fora institutional strengthening and capability building

e. Identification of collaborative projects

This will be a subject of future discussions by the Committee.

## **6. Reports from the Regional Fora Chairs**

Brief reports from Asia Pacific Association of Agricultural Research Institute (APAARI), Association of Agricultural Research Institutes in the Near East and North Africa (AARINENA), and Latin America and the Carribean regional fora were provided to the participants for their information.

## **7. Other Business**

### **a. Participation in the Global Knowledge '97 Conference**

The GFSC endorsed the participation of Fernando Chaparro in the International Symposium on Global Knowledge '97: Knowledge for Development in the Information Age which will be held from June 22 to 25, 1997 in Toronto, Canada. He will present the experience of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research as an innovative case of an effort to mobilize the scientific community around a major development and global issue. In his communication dated May 16, 1997 to the members of the Committee, he invited any interested member to join him and participate in the conference.

**Meeting** **Global Forum Steering Committee Inaugural**

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