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**Research Impact: Yesterday's Achievements, Tomorrow's
Challenges**

Report of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research

The following three documents are being distributed to ICW participants at the request of the Chair of the Global Forum Steering Committee (GFSC) as background to the Committee's report, Agenda Item 10:

- GFAR Report of Activities: 1996-1997
- Operationalization of the NARS-SC Secretariat
- Minutes of the 2nd NARS Steering Committee Meeting

Global Forum on Agricultural Research

**GFAR Report of Activities:
1996-1997**

1. Research Partnerships, Strategic Alliances, and the Global Forum on Agricultural Research

The **Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)** was established on October 31, 1996, as a global framework or collective endeavor that facilitates exchange of information, access to knowledge, cooperation and research partnerships among the various stakeholders related to agricultural research and sustainable development. In doing so, it seeks to strengthen national agricultural research systems (NARS) and regional and sub-regional fora, and to encourage the identification and development of collaborative research projects in areas of common interest. The Global Forum emerged from the conviction that, in order to respond to the increasing challenges and research needs we presently face, as well as take advantage of the new opportunities that are being generated by advances in science, it is necessary to promote the development of a *Global System for Agricultural Research*, based on cost-effective partnerships and strategic alliances among the various institutional actors involved in agricultural research, aimed at three major objectives:

- reducing poverty
- assuring food security
- assuring the conservation and management of biodiversity and the natural resource base.

There are three fundamental beliefs that are at the origin of the Global Forum. First is a **science-base vision of the future and of the role knowledge plays in contemporary societies**. Science, especially the new strategic areas of research and of technological development in the biological sciences, can make a major contribution to overcoming poverty and hunger, increasing food availability, and halting the serious deterioration of the natural resource base that we are facing. Knowledge and science are not only instrumental in achieving these objectives. They permeate the process of social change and of development in the present context of knowledge societies and knowledge economies.

Secondly, recent trends clearly point out that knowledge generation and utilization is increasingly based on **transnational research systems and networks, that build upon research partnerships and strategic alliances** among the key stakeholders and actors involved in this process. Innovation is no longer the result of the endeavours of a single institution or firm; it is the product of iterative processes that lead to *“Networks of Learning”* constituted by various actors that play complementary roles in

this process. Besides the participation of NARS, IARCs, and ARIs in the process of research and technological development, this also requires the active involvement of the private sector, of NGOs and of end-users in such endeavours.¹

Thirdly, it is of critical importance to avoid the dangers of potential inequities between and within countries, that could emerge from increasing technology gaps and exclusion forces based on the capacity to access and use technology, and thus to harness the power of science. If this issue is not addressed, we may end up with growing imbalances that will lead to increasing poverty and environmental deterioration in many parts of the world, despite the increasing capacity and opportunities to cope with these problems that modern science is generating.

It is interesting to highlight that in the first meeting of the Global Forum it was pointed out that research partnerships may involve some *transaction costs* compared to research endeavours in a single research centre. But on the basis of the three considerations that have been made, it was considered that these transaction costs are justified in terms of avoiding the potential dangers (and costs) of growing technology gaps, and thus increasing inequities within or among countries. The greater dissemination of knowledge and research capacities, and thus of innovation, is the only way of coping with this problem. They are also justified in terms of the **greater cost-effectiveness** in increasing the possibility of development impact because of the involvement of stakeholders and end-users in this process. The gains therefore offset the transaction costs involved. In fact, in some cases cooperation and innovation networks may be the only way of coping with some of the research and development issues involved, at least in an effective way. But it was also pointed out that the issue of transaction costs and of cost-effectiveness was one that had to be clearly monitored.

The origins of the Global Forum lie in the IFAD-convened meeting held in Rome in December 1994 (see later p.9) and in the recent efforts of the CGIAR to broaden its partnerships with national agricultural research systems (NARS), regional organizations, advanced research institutions (ARIs), non-governmental organizations (NGOS), universities, and the private sector, among others, and to increase the participation of the South in CGIAR decision-making. These ideas have been developed as part of the **Renovation Process** launched by the Chairman of the CGIAR.² This process involved

¹ In this report we will use the following names: NARS (national agricultural research systems), IARCs (international agricultural research centres), and ARIs (advanced research institutes in universities or centres of excellence around the world).

² See “*Renewal of the CGIAR: Sustainable Agriculture for Food Security in Developing Countries*”; Proceedings of the Ministerial-Level Meeting held in Lucerne, Switzerland, February 9-10, 1995; Washington, CGIAR, 1995.

consultation with groups of NARS on the substance of research collaboration, the subsequent emergence of representative regional groupings (Regional Fora), and, finally, a Global Forum (section 3 describes this consultation process in more detail).

It should also be pointed out that the need for collaboration and for the development of research partnerships and strategic alliances was also being actively sought by research institutions and firms in both developed and developing countries, as a way of responding to the increasing challenges they are facing. Four important considerations clearly pushed in this direction:

- Increasingly complex and urgent development problems, that generate growing research needs and thus expanding research agendas.
- At the same time, decreasing availability of public resources devoted to research, as reflected in both real expenditure per researcher and the annual growth rate in research expenditure.
- The impact of globalization in terms of promoting cooperation in tackling development challenges that are of a global nature. These challenges form part of the global agenda that is dominating this end of century.
- As pointed out above, innovation and technical change is increasingly the product of transnational research networks facilitated by advances in information and communication technology (ICT), making communication among researchers across the globe faster and less costly.

This last point is particularly important. Research carried out on innovation processes and innovation systems has clearly emphasized the role of *innovation networks* as the main agent of knowledge generation and technical change in both the industrial and agricultural sectors.³ The same has been found to be the case in the area of biotechnology, where corporations form partnerships as part of their strategy to increase their competitive advantage. A recent CGIAR report points out that “Having an internal research capacity is necessary but not sufficient for innovation. The complexity of the problems faced and the rapidity of the advances in knowledge compel companies and

³ See for example B.A. Lundvall: *National Systems of Innovation: Towards a Theory of Innovation and Interactive Learning*; London, Printer Publishers, 1992. Charles Edquist: *Systems of Innovation: Emergence and Characteristics*; London, Castell Academic Press, 1997. Richard Nelson: *The Agenda of Growth Theory: A Different Point of View*; New York, Columbia University, 1995.

their researchers to reach out widely for partners.”⁴ Another study points out that “when the knowledge base of an industry is both complex and expanding and the sources of expertise are widely dispersed, the locus of innovation will be found in *networks of learning*, rather than in individual firms.”⁵

These research partnerships and networks involve the active participation of National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), International Agricultural Research Centres (IARCs), Advanced Research Institutes in universities or centres of excellence around the world, the private sector, NGOs and Farmers’ Organizations. The IARCs are particularly well placed to play an important role in this process, given the high-quality research infrastructure they have, their knowledge of tropical agriculture, the network of contacts in developing countries, their germplasm collections, and the highly trained research staff that constitute one of their main assets. Many of the transnational research networks that can be generated through the Global Forum can be coordinated by specific IARCs, working in close collaboration with the other stakeholders.

2. The Declaration and Plan of Action for Global Partnership in Agricultural Research

The considerations made in the previous section lead to the adoption of **The Declaration and Plan of Action for Global Partnership in Agricultural Research** at a *Global Forum on Agricultural Research* held on October 30-31, 1996, as part of International Centers Week, the main annual meeting of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). This Declaration and Plan of Action is included in Annex I.

Mr. Fawzi Al-Sultan, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), presided at the Global Forum, at which the various components in the global agricultural research system joined together for the first time to explore the needs and opportunities for agricultural research, the scope for collaboration, and practical measures to strengthen partnerships, in the interest of promoting sustainable agricultural development for food security. Five practical goals were emphasized in the

⁴ See CGIAR: *Strengthening CGIAR-Private Sector Partnerships in Biotechnology*; CGIAR Secretariat, April 30, 1997, pp. 8-9.

⁵ See W.W. Powell, K.W. Koput and L. Smith-Doerr: “Interorganizational Collaboration and the Locus of Innovation: Networks of Learning in Biotechnology”; in: *Administrative Science Quarterly*, No. 41, 1996, pp. 116-145. Rosabeth Kanter: “Collaborative Advantages: The Art of Alliances”; in: *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1994.

Global Forum, and they are reflected in the **Declaration** and the **Plan of Action** that were adopted (see Annex I):

- to enhance the capacity of NARS to generate and transfer, in a participatory way, appropriate technology that responds to the needs of the end-users (this reflects the strategic importance of NARS in the research-technical change-innovation process, in order to achieve the development impact we seek);
- to improve priority setting for a global framework for development-oriented agricultural research, reflecting the needs of the end-users;
- to strengthen NARS-NARS partnerships and the emerging Regional Fora;
- to mobilize the global agricultural research community in a concerted effort to address sustainable development issues, and to facilitate research partnerships among the various actors involved; and
- to secure financial support for implementing a Plan of Action.

In order to facilitate the implementation of the Plan of Action, it was decided that the Global Forum **will be convened every three years** to exchange information in order to identify common challenges, confirm principles of collaboration, and propose alternative means of implementing collaborative programmes and facilitate research partnerships. In between, the Global Forum will function through the collaborative programmes it promotes, and through making intensive use of e-mail, the INTERNET and electronic research networks, **taking full advantage of the opportunities created by the new information and communication technologies**. Thus the Global Forum is based on the concepts of transnational electronic networks, using the new institutional models of *virtual organizations* and *dynamic learning processes* through purposeful interaction. Here the Regional Fora and the Sub-regional cooperation programmes will play a key role, as one of the main operational units of the Global Forum.

Another important aspect that was discussed was that of the **principles that should guide the Global Forum**. This is particularly important since this defines the nature of the Global Forum and the approach that will be followed in pursuing the above mentioned objectives. Dr. Ismail Serageldin, Chairman of the CGIAR, outlined these principles as follows, reflecting many of the ideas and recommendations made by the Regional Consultation meetings and the ideas expressed in the reports of the Regional Fora:⁶

⁶ See Ismail Serageldin: *The CGIAR at Twenty-five: Into the Future*; Washington, CGIAR Secretariat

- a) **Subsidiarity:** The GFAR is based on a principle of subsidiarity: programmes and projects should be both planned and managed at the most local level at which they may be effectively completed. This seeks to assure a participatory, bottom-up approach, within the context of a global system.
- b) **Enhancement (“valorisation”) and dissemination of traditional knowledge:** Complex resource-use systems have been developed by farming communities and have worked effectively for thousands of years. The GFAR will support the gathering, conservation and dissemination of existing knowledge from various sources for appropriate and widespread use as well as the generation of new community-based knowledge.
- c) **End-user involvement:** The GFAR seeks to build productive linkages between farmers and researchers. This is one of the main partnerships that will be promoted, through the dissemination of interesting experiences in this direction and the support of innovative ventures in NARS around the world.
- d) **Importance of NGOs and of Farmers’ Organizations:** It is important to recognize that farmers’ organizations, community organizations and other NGOs play a very important role, both as potential research partners and as sources of knowledge on production, environmental and societal issues. These organizations are particularly well situated to provide guidance on social development aspects (i.e. gender issues), and technology transfer and adoption processes.
- e) **NARS as the cornerstone of the new global research system:** NARS play a key role in making the bridge between needs-assessment (priority setting), research, technical change and adoption/innovation. Thus they are the key to a global farmer-back-to-farmer interchange that can drive broad scientific advances in agriculture, assuring that they relate to location-specific production circumstances and ecological problems. Capacity-building, communication and mutual respect are key elements to assure a stronger role for NARS and for their regional associations (Regional Fora).
- f) **Participation of the Private Sector:** The role of the private sector has become increasingly important, reflecting the fact that biological research and the technology generated by it has become more privatized, as a result of a series of factors that are facilitating the process of *technology appropriation*. Presently, it is estimated that the private sector is responsible for approximately 80 % of the research in plant biotechnology worldwide. In some developing countries the private sector also plays an important role, although in a much lower proportion,

specially in the area of commodity research. An important research capacity is thus located in the private sector, at both the multinational level as well as the national level in some developing countries. Thus opportunities should be provided for the private sector to share its knowledge and resources with other partners. The research partnerships the GFAR will seek to promote include strategic alliances between the public and the private sectors.⁷ For this to be feasible, it is important to develop a regulatory framework that, while protecting the public good, does provide the proper incentives for the private sector to invest. This also requires breaking down barriers of misunderstanding and mistrust that has often characterized the relationships between the two sectors, in order to replace it with a platform of knowledge sharing. This may require changes in organizational culture in many research institutes.

- g) **Promote integration of NARS (evolution from NARIs to NARS):** Given the pluri-actorial environment in which we presently operate reflecting important processes of institutional diversification, it is of high priority to facilitate/promote the process of integration of NARS. The fundamental role of the public national research institute (NARI), as the hub of the national research system, should be reinforced. But it is important that appropriate synergisms and complementarities be developed among the various institutions related to agricultural research and technological development, including the universities and the other organizations mentioned above.
- h) **Central role of the CGIAR and of IARCs:** The CGIAR must see itself as an active participant in the further development of the global agricultural research system. The IARCs are particularly well placed to play an important role in this process, given the high-quality research infrastructure they have, their knowledge of tropical agriculture, the network of contacts in developing countries, their germplasm collections, and the highly trained research staff that constitute one of their main assets. Many of the transnational research networks that can be generated through the Global Forum can be coordinated by specific IARCs, working in close collaboration with the other stakeholders.

⁷ On this issue see CGIAR: *Strengthening CGIAR-Private Sector Partnerships in Biotechnology*; CGIAR Secretariat, April 30, 1997.

3. Consultation Process with NARS and other partners of the Global Forum

The ideas analyzed in the previous two sections, as well as the establishment of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research, were the result of an open and participatory process that has involved the various stakeholders and actors of agricultural research and sustainable development. A deliberative *renewal process* to embrace the new vision of a global agricultural research system and address the complex challenges of reducing poverty, increasing food security while conserving the environment, through cost-effective partnerships and a comprehensive global research agenda, was initiated in December 1994. This international consultation process that began with a “*NARS’ Vision of International Agricultural Research*” convened by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome, produced a series of recommendations to strengthen NARS-CGIAR partnerships and to strengthen NARS/NARS cooperation at the regional and sub-regional levels.

These ideas were reflected and further discussed at the *Lucerne Ministerial-Level* meeting that took place in February of 1995, and they were integrated into the *CGIAR Renewal Process* that was initiated at that moment. Following the adoption of the *Outline Action Plan* that took place at International Centre’s Week in October of 1995 (ICW95), two important steps were taken as part of the process of consulting with the various stakeholders and actors of agricultural research. First, three Committees were established in order to consult with institutional sectors that play an important role in this process: NGOs, the Private Sector and the Advanced Research Institutes (ARIs). Secondly, a series of *Regional Consultation Meetings* were held to consult with the NARS, as one of the key actors in agricultural research and sustainable development. These meetings took place in late 1995 and early 1996:

- West Asia and North Africa (WANA), December 10-11, 1995
- Asia-Pacific (AP), February 1-2, 1996
- Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA), February 5-6, 1996
- Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), February 20-22, 1996

The ideas mentioned in sections 1 and 2 of this report were discussed in each Regional Consultation meeting, placing emphasis on how best to respond to both the opportunities and the challenges that were emerging in the new knowledge-based and science-intensive global environment in which we operate. Two main results came out of these four regional consultation meetings. In the first place, each one came up with *Regional Plans of Action* aimed at strengthening regional cooperation in this sector, as well as strengthening interaction with the CGIAR. Secondly, they all decided to establish a Regional Forum in each region, as a mechanism aimed at promoting and

facilitating research partnerships between the NARS of each region, and between the latter and the other key actors of agricultural research (IARCs, ARIs, etc.). It should be pointed out that in the case of Africa the February 1996 meeting was only a preliminary meeting. It wasn't until February 1997 that FARA was formally established, as a Regional Forum on Agricultural Research.

It should be pointed out that within the **Regional Fora**, special emphasis has been placed in strengthening **Sub-regional cooperation mechanisms and programmes**, specially in the case of Africa and of Latin America and the Caribbean (the case of the PROCIS in the latter). The regional and sub-regional levels complement and reinforce each other; the first one does not replace the second one. In fact, in many cases the most operational unit for cooperation is the sub-regional one, given the fact that it brings together relatively homogeneous groups of countries.

Between March and September of 1996 the four Regional Fora collectively prepared a synthesis proposal, based on the ideas proposed in the four Regional Action Plans: a ***Plan of Action for Strengthening Global Agricultural Research: The NARS Perspective***. In the process of preparing the synthesis document the chairpersons of the four Regional Fora met in Rome on August 26 to 30, 1996, with the facilitating agencies that had supported all the process (IFAD, FAO, ISNAR, SDC, EC, WB/ESDAR and the CGIAR Secretariat). It should be pointed out that this group of facilitating agencies have played a key role in all this consultation process. In the coordination meeting in Rome in August 1996, the chairpersons of the four Regional Fora established the NARS Global Steering Committee (NARS-GSC)⁸, in order to facilitate and coordinate action at the global level.

The *Plan of Action/NARS Perspective* mentioned in the previous paragraph, along with the *Reports of the other Committees* (NGOs, Private Sector, Farmers' Organizations, and ARIs), were presented at the Global Forum on Agricultural Research that took place in Washington, D.C., on October 30-31, 1996. It was on the basis of all of these inputs generated by an open and participatory process, that the ideas, objectives and principles mentioned in sections 1 and 2 of this report emerged. Thus the establishment of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research has been very much a bottom-up approach, based on consultation with the stakeholders and with all the key actors involved, and seeking to assure their commitment to the goals and the approach that is being adopted. This is also the reason why the Regional Fora and the Sub-regional cooperation programmes are the main building blocks and operational units of the Global

⁸ At their meeting of 26 October 1997, they decided to change the title into NARS Steering Committee (NARS-SC) in order to avoid any confusion with the Global Forum Steering Committee (GFSC) set up in Washington in October 96, whose they are full members.

Forum.

4. Activities carried out in 1996-1997

In the year that has elapsed since the establishment of the Global Forum the process of implementation of the *Plan of Action for Global Partnership in Agricultural Research* (see Annex I) has made good progress. The main steps and actions taken are as follows:

- a) In November of 1996 the Washington Declaration and the Plan of Action were tabled at the **World Food Summit**, and the objectives and purpose of the Global Forum were discussed with many of the delegates to this summit. The Global Forum can play a key role in mobilizing the global scientific community in a concerted effort aimed at achieving the objectives and goals set forth by the World Food Summit.
- b) The Plan of Action approved in Washington established a **Global Forum Steering Committee (GFSC)**, and mandated it to translate this Plan of Action into a detailed programme of activities, consulting the various constituencies when necessary. As pointed out in section 2, the Global Forum and its Steering Committee are making intensive use of the new information and communication technologies to be able to interact on a continuous basis, while reducing the need for costly meetings and large bureaucracies.⁹ On the basis of this approach, the GFSC started interacting throughout the first semester of 1997. The practice of circulating frequent electronic messages among the members of the GFSC, giving even a wider circulation to these messages, was initiated. Four Communications or Information Notes were circulated this year, through a combination of e-mail and fax: on March 16, May 16, June 16 and September 15 (these communications are included in Annex II). This practice is generating a *dynamic electronic network* through which the GFSC is starting to operate on close to a continuous basis. The feedback and comments that have been received in response to the Information Notes have been quite significant. Besides the information communications, a more frequent exchange of ideas and suggestions among the different Regional Fora and the members of the GFSC is starting to develop. It is precisely because of this dynamic exchange of ideas that we have

⁹ The two Secretariats that will be described later are very *small support units* based in existing organizational facilities, that generate only a small marginal cost related to the functioning of these units. But their capacity to operate and deliver will be dependent on heavy use of the new information and communication technologies, and on electronic research networks.

been able to generate the draft **GFAR: Programme of Work for 1998-2000**, that will be the basis for our discussion of this agenda item in the October meeting of the GFSC at ICW97. In some NARS we are still facing limited availability of computers, and thus of access to e-mail facilities (for this reason we are still using a combination of e-mail and fax communication). But in the nine months of 1997 a notorious improvement has been evident. We are close to full e-mail contact among GFSC members, and with Regional and Sub-regional groups in the case of NARS.

c) The first formal meeting of the GFSC took place in Cairo on May 24 and 25, at MTM97. The main topics covered in that meeting were:

- Definition of the Global Forum Steering Committee's mandate and functions.
- Adoption of an interim committee membership composition: 5 Regional Fora chairs, 3 representatives from ARIs, 1 from NGOs, 1 from Farmers' Organizations, 1 from the private sector, 1 from IARCs and 1 from the Donor Group.
- Recommended the establishment of two secretariats: one for the NARS Steering Committee and one for the GFSC. These two Secretariats are conceived as *small support units* based in *existing organizational facilities*, that generate only a small additional cost related to the functioning of such units. As pointed out above, their capacity to operate and deliver will be dependent on heavy use of the new information and communication technologies, and on electronic research networks. It is important to point out that the financial resources that are being required for the implementation of the Global Forum are **not primarily due** to the cost of the secretariat support that is being put in place, but rather to the **Programme of Work** (concrete activities) that is being proposed for 1998-2000.¹⁰ This is where the financial support is really required, in accordance with the principles that have been approved for the GFAR. It is important to keep the secretariat support that is required to this limited level.

¹⁰ See the draft (proposed) *GFAR: Programme of Work for 1998-2000*, that will be discussed and adopted in the next GFSC at the time of ICW 1997, after the relevant adjustments and modifications are made. This Programme of Work will be divided in two separate but complementary sets of activities to be implemented separately either by the NARS-SC secretariat or by the GFSC secretariat, in accordance with their respective mandate/scope of action.

- Discussion and definition of the secretariat services and operational support that will be provided by each secretariat. This has to be further operationalized in the coming months.
- Endorsement of the initial activities to be carried out or promoted by the GFSC, including the establishment of an electronic global forum on agricultural research (EGFAR).

The Report of the First Meeting of the GFSC is included in Annex III. The various activities discussed have been implemented in the five months since Cairo.

- d) A report on the initial activities of the GFAR was presented in a Plenary Session of the CGIAR in MTM97. After hearing and discussing the report, the Group endorsed the report of the GFSC, its recommendations on implementing the Global Forum Plan of Action, and the decision to establish two secretariats, one for the GFSC and the second for the NARS-SC. It was agreed that the GFSC secretariat would be based at the World Bank/ESDAR in Washington. It was also agreed that FAO, IFAD and ISNAR would develop a proposal for the establishment of the NARS-SC secretariat, to be jointly supported by these three agencies. This proposal would then be consulted with the NARS-SC, and finalized before ICW97.
- e) In late June and early July an inter-agency meeting was held in Rome with the participation of FAO, IFAD, ISNAR and other facilitating agencies to discuss the best way to set up the NARS-SC secretariat, with the support of these three agencies. A first draft of this paper came out of this meeting. This paper was then circulated to the members of the NARS-SC, who met in early September in Montpellier on the occasion of the *European Colloquium on Agricultural Research for Development*. The NARS representatives then prepared a final version of this paper (see: *Operationalization of the NARS-SC Secretariat*) which was adopted at the NARS-SC meeting of 26 October 1997. The paper describes in detail the guiding principles for establishing the NARS-SC secretariat, as well as the key objectives and functions of this secretariat.

In terms of the organizational aspects, it is proposed that the secretariat be located in FAO, although it will function as an autonomous body following the principles that are outlined in the paper. It is also proposed that a small **Donor Support Group** be established constituted by those donors interested in contributing to the implementation of the *Global Forum Plan of Action*. This idea is being explored with donors to determine the receptivity that this possible mechanism has. IFAD will initiate the process of consultation within the donors' community. IFAD also

plays an important role in providing support to the projects and activities that will be carried out (see Programme of Work for 1998-2000). Thirdly, ISNAR will provide technical support to the secretariat and to the implementation of the activities to be carried out (see Programme of Work for 1998-2000). This paper is being presented to the GFSC meeting at the time of ICW97.

- f) As pointed out above, the two support secretariats are conceived as small support units that build upon capacities already existing in FAO, IFAD and ISNAR (for the NARS), and in ESDAR for the GFSC. Nevertheless, they will require some limited funds to be able to function and carry out their activities. But, in accordance with the principles approved for the GFAR, most of the funds that will be mobilized will be devoted to *concrete collaborative actions and projects*, not to bureaucracy. These actions are described in the proposed **GFAR Programme of Work for 1998-2000** that is being presented in a separate document (see footnote 10). The financial requirements are mainly being generated by the concrete activities to be carried out, and by the support to the Regional Fora and the Sub-regional cooperation programmes.
- g) In September 25 and 26 the **European Colloquium on Agricultural Research for Development** was held in Montpellier, France, under the auspices of EIARD with ECART and NATURA as organizing agencies and AGROPOLIS as the hosting body. A review of European research programmes related to agricultural research for development was made, as well as a discussion on how to strengthen this area of research in Europe, and how to promote/facilitate research partnerships between European research centres and research centres and stakeholders in other regions. It was decided that in order to facilitate the participation of European institutions (research centres, NGOs, the private sector) in the Global Forum, an *European Forum on Agricultural Research for Development* would be convened in 1998. This is an important step in strengthening another major actor of the Global Forum. The NARS that participated in the Montpellier meeting made a contribution to the European Colloquium through a series of reflections on how they perceived this process, on the basis of their own experience in establishing Regional Fora and promoting regional and sub-regional cooperation (see *Observations made by NARS in the Last Plenary Session of the European Colloquium on Agricultural Research*, that is included in Annex IV of this report). Fernando Chaparro, Chairman of the GFSC, also presented a paper on *Agriculture, Research and Development: The Global Context* (copy of which is available to interested persons).
- h) In the last two months the secretariat of the GFSC has started to operate in ESDAR. One of the first activities that the secretariat is undertaking is the setting up of **EGFAR**, as an electronic global forum on agricultural research. A

presentation of EGFAR will be made in the next meeting of the GFSC at ICW97. One of the issues that has come up in the process of setting up EGFAR is that of the **Logo for the GFAR**. A consultation process is under way with GFSC members. This will be discussed in the GFSC meeting at the end of this month.

- i) Agricultural Information Systems are being developed in various regions, as part of the Global Forum. An important case of this is **InfoSys-Europe**, that was presented at the Montpellier Colloquium. The various Regional Fora are integrating the development of regional information systems in their activities. *It will be important to assure the compatibility, complementarity and close interaction among these various regional information systems, as well as between them and EGFAR.*
- j) The CGIAR Private Sector Committee presented a report on **Strengthening CGIAR-Private Sector Partnerships in Biotechnology** (CGIAR Secretariat, April 30, 1997). This report has many interesting ideas with respect to this important dimension of the Global Forum. Several of these ideas have been integrated into the proposed Programme of Work for 1998-2000.
- k) The World Bank organized in Washington a **Meeting on Biotechnology and Biosafety** in October 9 and 10 that analyzed many of the issues that have led to the establishment of the Global Forum, but specifically in the context of biotechnology and biosafety in its applications to development. Fernando Chaparro presented a paper in this meeting on the topic of **Research Partnerships in Biotechnology: The Role of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research** (copy of which is available to any interested person). Besides a discussion of research partnerships in biotechnological research, this paper presents an analysis of the approach that a specific NARS (Colombia) has taken, in developing a research agenda and a research strategy in the area of biotechnology. The discussion of this paper, and others that were presented in that same session, led to an analysis of what the Global Forum could do in this area. The ideas that were discussed in the Washington meeting were reflected in the proposed *GFAR Programme of Work for 1998-2000*. The Washington meeting was very useful for identifying the opportunities and challenges we face, and for outlining some of the tasks that could be carried out within the GFAR.
- l) The **Regional Fora and Sub-regional programmes** have carried out many activities in this last year. A brief report will be presented by each chairperson¹¹

¹¹ Note that Eastern Europe/Central Asia has not yet started a process for the establishment of a Regional forum and has no representative in GFSC.

of each Regional Forum, in the GFSC. One of the important steps that have been taken at the regional level is the establishment (now implementation) of the *Regional Fund for Agricultural Technology in Latin American and the Caribbean*, as a collective effort of 16 countries with the support of IDB. The *Operations Manual* and the *Mid Term Plan* (Regional Strategic R&D Plan) of the Fund were recently approved. In this last month the Regional Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture of the LAC region (the *JIA*) endorsed the *Regional Forum on Agricultural Research*, and requested IICA to provide secretariat support to it in order to strengthen it.

- m) The most important step that has been taken this year is the preparation of the proposed **GFAR Programme of Work for 1998-2000**, on the basis of ideas that were discussed in Cairo (May), Montpellier (September), Washington (October), and through exchange of views by e-mail over the last several months. This is a very important and dynamic dimension of the Global Forum that is starting to operate. For example, the approach and methodology that is being worked out as a joint undertaking between the *NGOs Steering Committee* and the *NARS-GSC*, is presently being discussed by an NGO meeting that is taking place in CIAT (October 13-17, 1997). This idea was initially discussed, although only briefly, in the Cairo meeting of the GFSC (see the proposed Programme of Work).

List of background documents

Document I

Declaration and Plan of Action for Global Partnership in Agricultural Research

Document II

Periodic Electronic Communications that are being Circulated in the GFSC and the GFAR

(March 16, May 16, June 16, and September 15)

Document III

Report of the First Meeting of the Global Forum Steering Committee (GFSC)

Document IV

European Colloquium on Agricultural Research for Development -- Observations made by NARS in the Last Plenary Session

Global Forum on Agricultural Research

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE NARS-SC SECRETARIAT

approved by the NARS-SC in its meeting of 26 October 1997 in Washington

A. Background and Rationale for a NARS Steering Committee (NARS-SC) Secretariat

1. The first Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) held in Washington DC under the Chairmanship of the President of IFAD adopted a Declaration for a Global Partnership in Agricultural Research and a Global Plan of Action. As an historical event, the GFAR represented the culmination of a large consultative process consisting of various events/decisions of global or thematic nature. The main ones are the renewal of the CGIAR, the two-year NARS-driven consultative process commencing in December 1994 at the IFAD-convened, Rome International Consultation on NARS' Vision of International Agricultural Research and the European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development which urges the ARIs to be part of that process. The "NARS" initiative was co-sponsored by a core Facilitating Group composed of EU, FAO, IFAD, ISNAR, The World Bank and Swiss DC, with initial financial contribution also from Denmark, Japan and the Netherlands.

2. At the GFAR, a Global Forum Steering Committee (GFSC) was established and mandated to consult with all the stakeholders and monitor the translation of the Action Plan into a detailed program of activities. At its first meeting during the Cairo CGIAR MTM held in May 1997, the GFSC recognized that the tasks and functions entailed by the Global Plan of Action were manifold and diverse, and that the NARS constituency was complex. It was therefore decided that the implementation of the Global Plan of Action would require two Secretariats – one for the NARS- Steering Committee (NARS-SC) and one for the GFSC, with distinct but complementary functions.

B. Basic Guiding Principles for Establishing the NARS-SC Secretariat

3. The NARS-SC” recognizes a number of basic principles that underly the creation and operation of the Secretariat. These are:

3.1. Autonomy and Accountability

- Autonomy, ownership and accountability to NARS community. The Secretariat is accountable to the NARS community through the NARS-SC;
- The Secretariat will enjoy autonomy from its host and supporting organizations in the execution of decisions and policy actions mandated by the NARS-SC;
- This autonomy will include the right to allocate funds within budgets approved by its donor organizations, excluding funds devolved to national, sub-regional, and regional levels.

The Secretariat, however, will follow administrative policies and practices negotiated with its host organization and approved by the NARS-SC.

3.2. Complementarity and additionality of activities

- Complementarity and rationality of resource use: the Secretariat will focus on activities that are essential to strengthening the NARS collective voice in the global system and strengthening partnerships in a way that is complementary to other actors;
- Additionality: explicit value addition to existing structures serving NARS, specially those which are established at regional/subregional levels.

3.3. Scope and Focus

- Specificity: focus on sustainable food production, rural poverty alleviation, environment and gender sensitivity, related with public goods of global nature and which are issues shared with the CGIAR; the NARS Secretariat will support its constituents at regional, subregional and national levels in addressing a broad scope of agricultural and natural resources research issues which include, but are not limited by, the commodity and thematic concerns of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research;
- Global scope: the NARS secretariat will facilitate the work of its constituents by focusing on the implications for NARS of global changes

and how they may influence such changes or adapt to them at the national and regional levels.

3.4. Subsidiarity

- Importance of bottom-up NARS-driven agenda;
- The execution of NARS, sub-regional, and regional activities will be planned and carried out in a bottom-up manner. Actions will be taken by actors at the lowest level NARS (i.e., sub-regional) at which they can efficiently and effectively be done. The Secretariat will facilitate such activities but not act directly;
- The Secretariat will encourage studies and exchange of ideas at the NARS and sub-regional levels needed to achieve the goals of the NARS-SC.

4. , As a consequence, the NARS Secretariat will endeavor to remain a lean facilitating body in adequation with agreed operational activities.

C. Goal and Key Objectives

5. The overall goal is to provide support to the NARS-SC and its constituencies composed of the NARS regional fora and sub-regional groupings, for developing a stronger collective voice for the NARS community in the setting and implementation of a global agricultural research agenda responsive to the threefold objectives of poverty alleviation, food security and sustainable use of natural resource.

6. The specific functions of the Secretariat is to facilitate the achievements of the following key goals included in the Global Plan of Action:

- a. To enhance, through sub-regional/regional fora, the capacity of NARS to generate and transfer, in a participatory mode, appropriate technology that responds to the needs of the end users;
- b. To improve priority setting to better reflect NARS' views in the global research agenda;
- c. To strengthen partnerships among NARS and between NARS and others stakeholders;
- d. To improve communication (or enhance the links) with other secretariats in the CGIAR and in the Global Forum.

D. Functions of the NARS-SC Secretariat

7. In order to fulfill the above mentioned goals and key objectives of providing support to the NARS community, the Secretariat will, under the guidance of the Chairman of the NARS-SC, undertake the following functions.

- i). Assist regional fora and sub-regional groupings to support institutionalization of the broader concept of NARS at the national level;
- ii). Assist regional fora and sub-regional groupings in deliberations/consultations for a common position on agricultural research issues of global, regional and sub-regional interest, in the context of the global research agenda;
- iii). Assist in priority setting and development of a research agenda at national and sub-regional levels;
- iv). Assist regional and sub-regional fora in developing mechanisms for systematic consultation among NARS on their major role in participating in the development of the CGIAR system-wide research agenda and in providing more effective inputs in the emerging Global Agricultural Research System, and in influencing priority setting exercise at a global level;
- v). Liaise with the GFSC Secretariat to enhance synergy and improve the NARS' access and contribution to the Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research (EGFAR), and with other secretariats of the CGIAR or the Global Forum.
- vi). Promote and facilitate inter-regional/subregional linkages and exchange of information and experiences, that may contribute to the strengthening of NARS in achieving their objectives.
- vii). Assist regional/subregional fora in the formulation and implementation of NARS/NARS collaborative research initiatives, and in interfacing with IARCs, ARIs, universities and the private sector, drawing on the comparative advantage of each partner.
- viii). Support the NARS-SC in its collaboration with IFAD, ESDAR and the Global Forum Donor Support Group in mobilizing resources from donors who are interested in financing collaborative agricultural research initiatives among NARS, and between NARS and other partners, as well as other activities of the Global Forum related to the objectives of the GFAR.

- ix). Undertake or coordinate those studies or activities that the NARS-SC may consider appropriate in promoting the development of the GFAR.

E. Institutional Status of the NARS-SC Secretariat

8. The NARS-SC Secretariat is a support organ for the NARS-SC which is composed by the five regional fora chairs. One of the members of the steering committee is elected as chairman on a 3-year rotational basis. The NARS-SC Secretariat will participate in the meetings of the NARS-SC, being responsible for providing the necessary support to these meetings. The work programme of the Secretariat will be prepared by the Secretariat and submitted for approval to the NARS-SC. IFAD, FAO, ISNAR and the GFSC Secretariat will be invited to participate in relevant NARS-SC meetings.

9. The Secretariat will be headed by an Executive Secretary to be recruited among the NARS community. This person may or may not be hired as a staff member of one of the three Agencies. The Executive Secretary will report to the NARS-SC. The size of the technical and administrative support staff needed will be determined on the basis of a three-year work program.

10. The NARS-SC Secretariat will be established as a facility jointly supported by FAO, IFAD and ISNAR, with contributions from other donors. The Secretariat will be located in FAO, although it will function as an autonomous institution following the principles mentioned above. In fulfilling its functions, the Secretariat will carry out programmes or activities with the support of FAO, IFAD, ISNAR and other relevant agencies.

11. The NARS-SC Secretariat is conceived as a small support group that builds upon capacities already existing in FAO, IFAD and ISNAR. Nevertheless, it will require some limited funds to be able to function and carry out its activities. In order to facilitate this, the possibility of establishing a **Donor Support Group** will be explored. This group would be constituted by those donors interested in contributing to the operationalization of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research, and specially to the strengthening of the participation of NARS in this Global Forum. IFAD¹ will initiate the process of the establishment of this Donor Support Group, and collaborate with it in seeking to mobilize the required funds.

¹ A discussion paper has been circulated, entitled " Establishment of a Donor Support Group for the Global Forum on Agricultural research.

Global Forum on Agricultural Research

MINUTES OF THE 2nd NARS STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

October 26, 1997 - 08:00 - 10:30 Four Seasons Hotel, Washington D.C.

The meeting was opened by Fernando Chaparro, Chairman of the NARS Steering Committee (NARS-SC) as well as of the Global Forum Steering Committee (GF-SC) who welcomed all participants to the meeting.

In his introductory speech, Fernando mentioned that this second meeting was organized as an open meeting to which were invited not only the Chairpersons of the 5 Regional Fora but also the Chairpersons or Executive Secretaries of the sub-regional associations or organizations, the regional representatives to the CGIAR and the representatives of the Facilitating Agencies. 24 persons attended this meeting. He indicated that this policy on attendance could be revised if the official members of the Steering Committee (the 5 Chairpersons of the Regional Fora) wish to do so and would prefer to work in closed sessions. Fernando also mentioned the four documents which were distributed for discussion during the meeting :

- GFAR Report of Activities : 1996 - 1997
- GFAR : Proposed Programme of Work 1998 - 2000
- Operationalization of the NARS-GSC Secretariat
- Establishment of a "Donor Support Group to the GFAR" (discussion paper)

The proposed agenda was approved without modification.

1. GFAR Report of Activities

The Chairman justified the preparation of a document more comprehensive than a normal report of activities, since there was a need to have in a single document a clear presentation of the origin and of the process which led to the establishment of the GFAR. This initiative was highly appreciated by the participants.

During the discussion, the following points were raised :

- The importance of looking at the institutional changes which are taking place at the national level to build the NARS and the fact that the CGIAR is simply adapting its mode of operations to better address these changes;
- The necessity for the regional fora not only to support conservation and dissemination of knowledge but also to help in the development of new knowledge;
- FARA was not present in the Cairo meeting but fully endorsed the conclusions and recommendations formulated. For FARA, one of the priorities is to find better ways and means to optimize the NARS - IARC relationships;

- Over the last 12 months, much progress has been made. It is now important to translate the terms of reference of the NARS-SC Secretariat into a specific programme of work, different but complementary from the GF-SC programme of work.

2. Presentation by the different Regional Fora

2.1. APAARI (Asia and Pacific)

Willy Dar, on behalf of the Chairperson of APAARI, made a brief presentation on the origin and current status of APAARI, emphasizing the fact that most of the activities are financially supported by the member contributions. APAARI's main recent activities have been : support to different research networks; documentation and publication of success stories (10); priority-setting exercises for the main commodities (beyond those worked by the CGIAR); and regular publication of a newsletter. The 3 year work programme presented last year is being implemented and APAARI recognizes the need to have a full time secretariat to assist in its implementation.

2.2. AARINENA (West Asia and North Africa)

Mohamed El Mourid, INRA Morocco, on behalf of Dr. A. Arifi, President of AARINENA, summarized the results of the last AARINENA Executive Committee which took place earlier this month in Cyprus. His presentation was complemented by Abdelmajid Slama from IFAD who attended the meeting. The main results were : a modification of the constitution to allow the association to welcome new countries, especially those from Central Asia; the preparation of collaborative sub-regional research projects; the preparation of the transfer of the secretariat from FAO/RNE to Cyprus.

2.3. FARA (Sub-Saharan Africa)

Moïse Houssou, acting Chairman of CORAF and FARA, indicated that FARA was only recently formally established (February 1997) and mentioned the difficulties faced in the leadership of the association due to the war situation in Congo. The main activities at the regional level have been : strategic planning at the sub-regional level; strengthening the collaboration between NARS and ARIs; integration or building NARS in the different countries. In his presentation, Moïse re-emphasized the concept behind the establishment of FARA : priority is given to the sub-regional associations, FARA playing only a role of forum. This is why FARA has no secretariat as such, this function, as well as the Presidency, being taking on a 2 yearly rotational basis by one of the three sub-regional associations. Finally, he mentioned the important past and future role of SPAAR to which the FARA Plan of Action and budget has recently been submitted.

2.4. CEE & CAC (Central and Eastern Europe - Central Asia and the Caucasus)

Fernando Chaparro indicated that this region represented an important challenge for the NARS-SC as no mechanisms are yet in place in these two regions to bring them on board. Further discussions should take place during ICW with the regional representative for Central and Eastern Europe.

2.5. LAC (Latin America and Carribeans)

Fernando Chaparro briefly presented the situation for the LAC region. During the first meeting of the LAC Regional Forum a document was prepared on its vision of the CGIAR priorities; this document was submitted to TAC in April 1996. In addition to the activities undertaken by the sub-regional associations/organizations (4 PROCIs and SICTA), the main actions taken at the regional level are : establishment of a regional fund for agricultural research and development (final decision expected in March 1998); establishment of a strategic plan for the regional fund (on-going consultation to get it approved by the individual countries); decision by the Ministers of Agriculture to ask IICA to provide the secretariat for the LAC Regional forum and to improve information exchange and communication between countries through the establishment of an agricultural information system by IICA.

3. NARS-SC Secretariat

The document presented at the meeting is based on a draft prepared jointly by FAO, IFAD and ISNAR in July 1997. In September 1997 this draft was carefully revised and amended during an informal NARS-SC meeting which took place in Montpellier, and took into consideration the agreement reached by FAO, IFAD and ISNAR on their respective roles, considering their respective advantages. The document was fully endorsed by the participants with some suggestions to improve its clarity and its consistency with the other documents. Subject to these changes, it was agreed that the final version will be distributed during the GF-SC meeting.

The Chairperson of FARA emphasized the need to get some guarantees on the financial support for the NARS-SC Secretariat before deciding on its official establishment. In his reply, Abdelmajid Slama stated that he accepted the official request of the NARS-SC for IFAD to initiate the establishment of the Donor Support Group (DSG). Accordingly IFAD will approach different donors before the GF-SC meeting so that a firmer answer can be given to this question. However, considering the support received from UNDP during the meeting and other earlier contacts, he strongly believed that the DSG should be established soon and funds made available. The NARS-SC thanked IFAD for accepting this responsibility.

During the discussions, it also appeared that there was a need to revise the terminology used, to make a list of the different acronyms and to design an organigram which will facilitate the understanding of the relationships between the different bodies. The need to move quickly to have a NARS-SC Secretariat operational was also stressed by the participants. Finally, it was decided that it will be important to split the proposed programme of work to indicate the respective responsibilities of the two steering committees and secretariats.

In order to revise the documents before distribution to the GF-SC meeting and to prepare additional ones requested by the participants, the Chairman suggested the establishment of a small working group which should report to the GF-SC meeting. The proposed members of

the working group were : F. Chapparo, M. Houssou, A. Slama, L. Fresco, C. Hoste and A. Derevier. This was endorsed by the participants.

4. Background to two topics that will be discussed in the GF-SC

This item of the agenda on the two papers dealing with the proposed programme of work and the DSG was skipped as the discussion had already taken place under item 3.

5. Project presented by the NARS-SC and the NGO-SC

The Chairman briefly presented the proposed joint NGO - NARS project. He indicated that in the coming 2-3 months a full proposal will be circulated to all regional representatives to seek their interest in participating and, if positive, to identify concrete case studies for the different regions. The importance of inter-country and not only inter-region comparisons was emphasized during the discussion.

6. Mode of operation of the NARS-SC

The Chairman suggested to keep the consultation between all interested bodies open till the GF-SC meeting. It will then be decided whether or not there is a need to change the current mode of operation, to confirm who are the members of the SC and the observers (if any) and the need for the SC to meet in closed sessions. This was endorsed by the participants.

7. Report on the meeting with the CGIAR Regional Representatives

The meeting between the NARS-SC and the CGIAR Regional Representatives could not take place before this meeting. The Chairman suggested to continue, for the time being, to invite the Regional Representatives to the deliberations of the NARS-SC.

8. Other topics

Manuel Lantin, CGIAR Secretariat, reminded the participants of the on-going CG System review and indicated that the review panel would like to meet the NARS representatives on Wednesday 29 October. The Chairman indicated that this was a very important invitation and that the NARS representatives should do the maximum to attend. The idea of preparing a common NARS position to be presented by the NARS-SC was mentioned and accepted.

The meeting was closed at 10:30 by the Chairman who thanked all participants for their attendance, their active participation and their constructive comments.