The CGIAR Oversight Committee (OC) held its 18th Meeting at the World Bank in Washington between 23 to 29 October 1999 in conjunction with the CGIAR's 1999 International Centres Week Meeting.

Participating in the meeting were: Andrew Bennett (Chair), Bongiwe Njobe, Mervat Badawi, Teresa Fogelberg, John Lewis and Selcuk Ozgediz (Secretary). The OC noted that William Dar, had recently been appointed to the post of Director General at ICRISAT. The OC interacted with the Chairman, the Finance Committee, the Chairman designate of TAC, the Centre Board Chairs and the Centre Directors’ Committee. The Chairman of the OC interacted with the acting-President of the World Bank - Sven Sandstrom on World Bank support for and leadership of the CGIAR, and attended the two meetings of the Consultative Council. The OC invited the prospective new members of the OC to its meeting on 28 October.

The OC agenda consisted of the following items:

1. Role of the OC
2. Follow-up to the System Review
3. System Governance
4. Centre Governance
5. Future priorities and Work Programme for OC
6. Membership and rotation
7. Any other business.

The Chairman and Members welcomed Bongiwe Njobe to the OC and reminded the members of the roles, functions and future priorities of the OC, as agreed at MTM 1999 in Beijing.

1. FUTURE ROLE THE OC

The OC recalled that it sees its future role of ‘due diligence’ as asking the questions:

- Is the governance system working?
- What adjustments might be made to make governance systems and processes more effective?
- What lessons can be learnt, what is good practice and are current instruments and guidance adequate?

It was noted that at MTM 99 the OC had reported to the CGIAR that it should be:

- a Committee of the Group, reporting to Plenary meetings of the CGIAR;
- purposeful and systematic in its interactions with other committees of the CGIAR – particularly with the Chair, Secretariat and the Finance, Centre Boards Chairs, Centre Directors and TAC Committees;
- made up of a cross section of members that contribute funding to the CGIAR, but serving in their own right;
- composed of six members drawn equally from developed and developing country members or organisations. It should seek to have members that are able to devote their full attention to the work of the OC. It should also have the authority to co-opt other members in the System, when specific issues are being considered;
- more active in commissioning reviews and studies on governance issues, while continuing to work informally through interaction during CGIAR meetings.
While continuing to focus on ‘due diligence’ and governance issues, the OC would also devote some time to working with TAC and FC on the longer-term strategic and viability issues.

On future priorities the OC would continue to carry out its functions of ‘due diligence’ but proposes also to focus on some specific governance issues
- Lessons learnt from the management and conduct of the System review
- Centre Board and Management relations and working practices
- Board Composition and competencies
- Centre/Host country agreements in a rapidly changing world.

2. FOLLOW-UP TO THE SYSTEM REVIEW

The OC noted that good progress is being made in following up actions agreed on the conclusions and recommendations of the System Review. The Review had been lengthy and expensive but it was too early in the process to judge the impact of this work. However it was important to draw out and record for future reference the lessons learnt in the organisation and conduct of the Review.

The OC recommends that a short strategic review is carried out and that the results of this study should be made available to the forthcoming work on the vision and restructuring of the CGIAR. Draft terms of reference and approach will be circulated to Members for comment.

3. SYSTEM GOVERNANCE

CGIAR Chair

The OC welcomes and whole-heartedly endorses the reaffirmation of Ismail Serageldin as the Chairman of the CGIAR, the strong support of the World Bank for the System. The OC looks forward to working closely with him over the next two years and will do all it can to ensure a smooth transition between him and his successor.

TAC Chair

The OC congratulates Professor Emil Javier on his appointment and welcomed the opportunity to meet with him at ICW. It hopes that such meetings will continue to be a regular event.

The OC considers that the open, inclusive and consultative process that had been followed in the identification for a new Chair of TAC to be and example of good practice. It recommends that the process and procedures followed be documented by the Secretariat for future reference and guidance.

Executive Secretary of the CGIAR

The OC considered draft terms of reference for the recruitment of a new Executive Secretary. It welcomed the commitment of the World Bank and other Co-sponsors to an inclusive and transparent process. It noted also that the World Bank wished the new Executive Secretary to be more closely integrated with the ESSD.

The OC will clear the terms-of-reference for the post before the Co-sponsors carry out the recruitment process.

Future Vision and Structure

The OC endorses the conclusions and recommendations of the Consultative Council on the timing and process to be followed. It looks forward to working with TAC in any way in which it can help.
Organisation of Meetings

One of the functions of the OC is to work with the Chairman and Secretariat on the agenda for the MTM and ICW meetings. It believes that it is important for the agenda to be carefully prioritised and for the Members to be given adequate time to prepare for the meetings. The Chairman’s letter prior to the meeting is a valuable way to draw attention to priority items, propositions and the decisions that we need to reach during the meeting. The OC recognises the special circumstances surrounding this ICW, but hopes that [given the new agenda it will], in future, the CGIAR will set and adhere to an agreed meeting agenda.

The OC has found its meetings with the CBC/CDC and the TAC Chairman particularly useful and productive, it believes that these interactions should become more systematic across the CGIAR and that time should be factored into future meetings to facilitate such interactions during the week of the meetings.

At MTM 2000 we will have the challenge and opportunities created by the Global Forum as well as the outcomes of TAC’s work on the future focus and priorities of the CGIAR. The meeting will need careful structuring and clear priorities. Adequate time will be needed to discuss the key issues and for possible meeting(s) of the Consultative Council.

Biotechnology Conference

The OC notes the successful outcome of the CGIAR/NAS International Conference on Biotechnology. It congratulates the Secretariat on the work it did to ensure the success of the meeting.

The OC recommends that the conclusions and recommendations of the conference should be an input into the TAC-led work on the future focus and priorities of the CGIAR.

4. CENTRE GOVERNANCE

The OC sees its main role as examining whether the governance processes in the System are working.

Good and effective relationships between the Boards and Senior Management of the Centres are essential to the health and effective working of the CGIAR.

Had these recent events arisen from stresses and stains in the relationships between the Boards and senior management of the Centres and/or from different interpretations of their respective roles and responsibilities? Are these events to be expected at a time of change or do they indicate a need to define more carefully or fully the respective roles and responsibilities of the various players?

Outcome of Interactions with CBC/CDC

The OC found its interactions with the CBC and CDC valuable and intends to repeat these meetings. However given the TAC reviews it feels that some of the specific issues it discussed with the CBC/CDC should be made part of and taken up in this process, e.g.: ⇒ Board/Senior Management interface ⇒ Board membership - competencies and composition

The OC applauds the orientation program being run this week for new Board Members.

ICRISAT - succession.

The OC congratulates William Dar on his appointment.
CIAT - succession

The OC commends the open and transparent process being followed in the search for the new Director General.

ILRI Vision

The OC notes that ILRI is making good progress with its response to the challenging conclusions and recommendations of its EPMR.

5. FUTURE PRIORITIES

⇒ Terms of reference for the lesson learning review of the Third System Review
⇒ Terms of reference for the new Executive Secretary for the CGIAR

6. MEMBERSHIP OF THE OC

The OC is renewing its membership. We are sorry to see the departure of William Dar, John Lewis and Teresa Fogelberg, but thank them for their valuable contributions and wish them all the best for the future. We are sure that we will see them again.

We welcome Bongiwe Njobe. With help from the membership we have identified an impressive list of new members to replace those [of us] who will be standing down over the coming year. Given the role and mode of working of OC, continuity is important. We look forward to welcoming Ruth Haug, Gilles Saint Martin, Emmy Simmons and Juan Restrepo to our next meeting. We hope also to be able to announce the name of one further member at MTM2000, once the invitation is formally accepted.

Draft by
Andrew Bennett 16/11/99