System Review Follow-up: Consultative Council's Proposition on Facilitating Decision-Making in the CGIAR

CHAIRMAN'S PROPOSAL ON COMPOSITION AND TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR A CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

The CGIAR Consultative Council established at ICW98 met in Brussels on January 27-28. In its recommendations on facilitating decision-making, the Council proposed that a Consultative Council be established as a permanent feature of the CGIAR system; and requested the CGIAR Chairman to propose the Council's composition and terms of reference for discussion at MTM99. The Chairman's proposal follows, for consideration under Agenda Item 3(d) iii.

1. Context

Sharply focused and effective decision-making has been a goal of the CGIAR since its inception, when the creation of an Executive Committee was proposed, but did not materialize. Several other prospects have been considered in recent years, and innovations introduced.

One such recent development was the creation at ICW98 of a Consultative Council to examine issues arising from recommendations of the third CGIAR System Review (SR) that required further study and elaboration. It represented an effort by the CGIAR to entrust an entity that is a microcosm of the system with the responsibility of clarifying issues, reviewing options, reaffirming fundamentals, defining specifics for action and, thereby, helping to facilitate decision-making by the Group as a whole.

A summary report (MTM/99/05) of the work of the council was distributed to CGIAR members in February. The council has proposed that a Consultative Council, akin to the entity created at ICW98, should be established as a permanent feature of the system's decision-making process.

The Record

Past efforts by the CGIAR to create an appropriate mechanism by which to enhance decision-making without eroding core principles and traditions included the following:

- CGIAR chairmen periodically convened ad hoc groups of members, representatives of standing committees and, more recently, of partnership committees, to review important issues and frame action points for consideration by the Group.
- A Finance Committee (FC) and an Oversight Committee (OC) were established at MTM93, on the recommendation of a working group (chair: Robert Herdt) set up at MTM92 to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the CGIAR's deliberation and decision-making processes, and to develop options for improving these processes. The OC and FC operate as sub-committees of the CGIAR. They do not exercise decision-making authority, and they report directly to the Group.
- The Group decided at MTM94 that the OC and FC could combine as a Steering Committee. The committees have met together several times although, generally, not as a formal Steering Committee.
- A seven-member working group (chair: Klaus Winkel) on governance, established as part of the CGIAR renewal program, recommended the establishment of a permanent CGIAR...
Bureau, consisting of heads of standing committees and cosponsors, meeting under the chairmanship of the CGIAR chair, to consult on major issues that require attention between the normal CGIAR meetings. The proposal was adopted but not implemented.

- Technical questions, external reviews, and issue-specific reports have been referred to small working groups meeting in parallel sessions at MTMs and ICWs, in order to sharpen the focus of discussion, and cope with an expanding agenda. Generally, working groups reach closure on the topics discussed, and inform the Group in plenary of the action taken. However, the decision of the working group may be reviewed in plenary if the Group or some members ask for such a discussion.

SR Recommendation and Follow-up

The third System Review recommended the establishment of a central board with access to funds, power to act on behalf of the CGIAR, and a chief executive. The board was expected to assume the functions of several existing committees, such as the Cosponsor group, FC, and OC.

Discussion of SR recommendations demonstrated that members did not wish to delegate decision-making authority down to a smaller group, and that centers were not willing to delegate any of their authority, but that both were amenable to have a smaller group take responsibility for facilitating decision-making.

The convergence of several developments has created the need for the CGIAR to establish such a small group as a permanent entity, rather than to continue working through ad hoc arrangements.

Expansion of the Group has enhanced its sense of universality, and enabled it to develop as a genuine South-North enterprise, with greater openness, and participation of a range of partners in policy discussions. The character and quality of discussion have therefore been substantially transformed. At the same time, however, with the consequent increase of the numbers attending Group meetings, opportunities for decisions to be based on discussions in depth of specific issues have become limited.

These developments have occurred during a period when a range of key issues—from trends in support for ODA through the impact of international conventions on the research at the centers to the ramifications of proprietary science—press upon the system. They add to the system’s ever-increasing agenda, while requiring decision-making that is focused and far-sighted.

Moreover, current decision-making arrangements do not provide for the full benefits of the system’s expertise and experience to be brought to bear on decision-making. The centers and their boards, in particular, are not adequately represented or involved in the process. A vital element is thus missing.

The proposed Consultative Council is meant to respond to these shortcomings without, however, challenging or destroying the organizational principles of the CGIAR.

2. Propositions

In relation to SR recommendations 13, 15, and 24—all covering decision-making in the CGIAR—the Council has submitted the following propositions for consideration by the Group at MTM99:
Maintain decision-making by consensus,
Do not reconstitute the CGIAR as a legal entity,
Establish a Consultative Council, similar to the ad hoc council set up by the Group at ICW98, as a permanent feature of the CGIAR decision-making process,
Make better use of the pool of talent on center boards and at the centers in CGIAR decision-making, through the composition of the proposed Consultative Council.

3. Terms of Reference

The responsibility of the proposed Consultative Council will be:

To serve as a facilitator by reviewing issues periodically, distilling the issues into a format that will sharpen discussion and decisions, and enable the Group to go directly to the core of the issues, thus making full productive use of its time at plenary meetings.

To fulfil this responsibility, the Council will be expected to:

- Meet periodically, e.g. immediately before CGIAR meetings or as circumstances require and, at other times, communicate electronically to the fullest extent possible,
- Review issues for discussion at CGIAR meetings, and craft propositions for further discussion and decision by the Group,
- Commission special studies, as necessary, and report to the Group on the significance of the issues examined, with suggested action points for consideration by the Group,
- Serve as a 'sounding body' that will advise the Group and the CGIAR Chairman on major issues and trends that are relevant to the CGIAR mission,
- Assist in integrating the work of CGIAR committees,
- Ensure that the viewpoint of all constituencies of the system are taken into account in decision making, and
- Facilitate clarity of communication among the various components of the CGIAR system.

The Council will be supported by the CGIAR Secretariat, the principal service unit of the CGIAR.

The FC and OC will continue to function as sub-committees of the Group, while maintaining a close working relationship with the Consultative Council.

4. Composition

The composition of the Consultative Council will be based on the following principles:

- Balanced representation, with provision for regular rotation,
- Inclusion of major constituencies, e.g. the centers, CGIAR standing committees, partnership committees, and
- Recognition of donor effort.

It is therefore proposed that the Council should consist of the categories and numbers illustrated below, under the chairmanship of the CGIAR chair. Member representatives of the council will be elected by the constituencies in caucus i.e. following the same procedure by which the Finance Committee membership is currently selected. Each member constituency will decide on a pattern of rotation.
The chair of each major CGIAR standing committee and partnership committee (including any that are established during or after MTM99) will serve as an *ex-officio* member of the council. The CBC and CDC will each be represented, *ex-officio*, by the committee chair and another committee member. The need to ensure inclusiveness might make for a somewhat large council but, inevitably, not all members will attend all meetings. Maintaining balanced and equitable representation is, however, essential.

**Proposed Composition of the Consultative Council**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constituencies</th>
<th>Numbers in Constituency</th>
<th>Council Members from Constituency</th>
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<td>Total Council Membership</td>
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5. **Next Steps**

- Discussion and decisions at MTM99.
- If the proposal to establish a Consultative Council is adopted—formation of the Council at MTM99, followed by an informal inaugural meeting in Beijing.

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<sup>1</sup> IAEG is not listed, because the Consultative Council has proposed that “IAEG should be integrated with TAC.”

<sup>2</sup> If the Group adopts the proposal of the Consultative Council for establishing a Science Partnership Committee, membership in the three committees is likely to be 8-8-8.