Chairman's Letter to Cosponsors and Stakeholders Group

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to share with you my thoughts about the Systemwide Review of the CGIAR as this is one of the major items for the Cosponsors meeting on October 27 and the consultation with the representatives of stakeholders the same evening.

When I proposed a renewal program for the CGIAR, I also suggested that we should have a systemwide review, but that this should be undertaken after the completion of the renewal process and the initiation of the agreed reforms. The renewal program was completed on schedule last year. Most of the key reforms have now been made, and changes are in place. Thus, at the Jakarta meeting (May 1996) we agreed to launch a review of the System, with a forward-looking focus, to be completed in 1997.

At the same meeting, the Oversight Committee kindly offered to facilitate the preparatory process. Since the MTM, Paul Egger and his colleagues have consulted with a cross section of the CGIAR and communicated to me their suggestions about the review. I would like to thank Paul and the Oversight Committee for their valuable advice and for their continuing role in upholding the interests of the CGIAR.

The proposal I would like to discuss with you builds on the Oversight Committee's suggestions. Key elements of the proposal are summarized in the attached note from the Secretariat. I would like to bring four aspects of the proposal to your attention:

First, the review should take the CGIAR's mission as a "given" and examine how successful the System has been in carrying out this mission and what it needs to do to further strengthen its performance. I am stressing this point because at the Lucerne meeting the members of the CGIAR, represented at the highest level, clarified the mission of the CGIAR as "contributing, through its research, to promoting sustainable agriculture for food security in developing countries." I do not believe therefore that it would be necessary for the System to ask a review panel to re-examine the mission defined by its highest governing body just last year. Short of that, the review team should have an absolute free hand in examining any aspect of the CGIAR.

Second, as the main business of the CGIAR is science, the review team should outline for us the scientific challenges that the System will need to address in the 21st century, as well as give us an opinion on the quality and relevance of the science practiced at the centers. Our science needs to maintain stringent standards of quality for our centers...
to remain "centers of excellence." In addition, the team should examine, at a minimum, the System's strategy, structure, governance, and finance. The System's structure, which we had agreed to keep "off limits" during the renewal period, can now be looked at to ensure its continuing effectiveness. And the preliminary effects of the recent changes we made in the governance and financing of the CGIAR need to be examined so that mid-course corrections, if needed, could be made.

Third, we must ensure that the review is conducted by independent, strategic thinkers of acknowledged stature who are sensitive to the issues under review. In this case independence does not necessarily mean externality. A review team of stature and credibility will be frank and forthcoming regardless of their affiliation, past or present, with the CGIAR. I suggest we entrust this review to a panel of seven such individuals, supported, as necessary, by working groups and an independent secretariat. I also suggest that we include in the panel, as ex-officio members, two persons from our independent advisory units, TAC and IAEG.

Fourth, we should have the review completed within a reasonably short period of time, but not at the expense of compromising quality or coverage. Persons of the stature we seek would find it difficult to make a commitment of time over an extended period. Equally important, we should ensure that the review is conducted with maximum efficiency. These requirements imply that the review should not "drag on" for a long period. I suggest we ask the panel to conduct the review with deliberate haste and plan to discuss their preliminary findings with the CGIAR at the Mid-Term Meeting in Cairo (May 1997). The MTM will enable the Panel to interact with several constituencies in one location. I would hope the Panel would complete its work over the subsequent few months and present its final report at ICW97.

I look forward to exchanging views with you on this and other subjects on October 27. In the interim, I encourage you to forward to the Secretariat names of individuals who should be considered for panel or working group membership or for the review secretariat.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Ismail Serageldin
Chairman

Attachment
A Note on the Systemwide Review of the CGIAR

**Background.** The CGIAR recently completed an eighteen month program of renewal designed to clarify its vision, refocus its research agenda, broaden its partnerships, stabilize its finances, and tighten its governance and operations. During the course of that program, the Group agreed that a systemwide review could be undertaken after the renewal process was completed, and all arrangements envisaged as part of the renewal of the CGIAR were in place. Such a systemwide review is now being planned.

**Purpose and Scope:** The Ministerial-Level Meeting held as part of the renewal program redefined the mission of the CGIAR as follows: “The mission of the CGIAR is to contribute, through its research, to promoting sustainable agriculture for food security in developing countries.” The review, which will be forward-looking, will assess the CGIAR’s effectiveness in carrying out this mission and make recommendations for improving its functioning. It would be conducted with a broad perspective, covering any aspect of the CGIAR the team considers important for its future effectiveness.

**Focus:** Notwithstanding the team’s freedom to examine any aspect of the CGIAR, the review should focus on at least the following:

1. **Science.** The scientific orientation of the System as it confronts future challenges, and the quality and relevance of the science that is practiced at the centers.

2. **Strategy and structure.** Priorities, strategies, and structure of the System, including its links with its partners.

3. **Governance and finance.** How effectively the System is governed and financed (including examination of the roles and responsibilities of Systemwide units, effectiveness of System-level management processes such as priority setting, resource allocation, and evaluation, and existing funding modalities.)

**Modality:** The review would be conducted by an independent panel. The Panel would be made up of seven members, appointed in their personal capacity, who:

- are independent, strategic thinkers;
- of global stature; and,
- collectively reflect the perspectives necessary for analysis of key issues.

A member of TAC and a member of IAEG, the System’s two independent advisory bodies, would serve as *ex officio* members of the Panel. They would participate in the discussions, but not in the preparation of the review report.

The Panel would be supported by three Working Groups, appointed to conduct detailed reviews of the three areas of the review (noted above). Each Working Group would be
chaired by a member of the Review Panel and made up of three or four experts, including the chair.

The work of the Review Panel and of the Working Groups would be facilitated by a small secretariat, not associated with the existing units of the System. The Panel and Working Groups would draw on these units for information or background materials.

**Timing:** The review would be launched at ICW96. The Panel would carry out the majority of its work by MTM97 and present its preliminary findings to the CGIAR at that meeting. The review team would organize consultations, as necessary, between ICW96 and MTM97. In addition to reporting its preliminary findings, the Panel would hold broad-based consultations with stakeholders at MTM97.

The Panel would meet three or four times, for about two days each. The Working Groups would also meet three or four times (each), in-between the initial and final meetings of the Panel.

**Appointment and Coordination Process:** The Panel would be appointed by the Chairman, on behalf of the CGIAR, following consultations with the Cosponsors, representatives of stakeholders, and members. A Stakeholder Committee would serve as a sounding board and interact with the Review Panel as and when necessary during the review.

**Cost:** About $750,000, made up of the following elements:

- Honoraria for Panel and Working Group members $100,000
- Travel for Panel and Working Group Members 200,000
- Fees for Secretariat staff 150,000
- Travel and subsistence for Secretariat staff 240,000
- Communication, supplies, other 60,000

The costs of the review would be covered by CGIAR members through a special System Review account.

CGIAR Secretariat
October 16, 1996