

Combined IPB and IPB-AFRC communiqué

Key Highlights and Decisions from their May 2025 meetings

The Integrated Partnership Board ('IPB' or 'Board') convened virtually on Friday 16 May, which was an important moment to review matters for the Board's concurrence prior to submission to the upcoming 22nd System Council, as well as on to consider matters under its own decision-making authority.

The Board's meeting was preceded by a meeting of the Board's Audit, Finance & Risk Committee (IPB-AFRC) on Monday 12 May, which provided recommendations to the Board on a number of decision items relating to implementation of the Integrated Partnership Risk & Oversight Plan ('ROP') and external audit matters for the System Organization ('SO').

The Board received an update on the Inception Phase of CGIAR's 2025-2030 Science and Innovation Portfolio and its prioritization process, designed to sharpen focus on high-impact research areas. The Board was advised that the Inception Plan is well on track to deliver a prioritized, more coherent Portfolio, with key activities, including the establishment of leadership and the operationalization of initial work plans. It supported and encouraged efforts to apply technical rigor to ensure that priority setting is aligned with CGIAR's strategic goals and informed by evidence-based criteria. The Board recognized the opportunity the new Portfolio presents to enable greater impact through improved focus, stronger partnerships, and a more unified research platform.

Members emphasized that adaptive management must be central to Portfolio implementation, particularly in the face of a rapidly evolving operating context and constrained financial landscape. Recognizing the limitations of the current funding environment, the Board stressed the need to align financial and human resources with strategic priorities, so that the Portfolio's ambitions are matched by execution capacity. The Board underscored that flexible, predictable, and timely financing — especially through unearmarked Window 1 contributions — is essential to preserving the integrity of the Portfolio. The Board acknowledged management's efforts to adjust resource allocations and institutional capabilities to support this alignment and welcomed the collaborative approach across Centers. It was noted that delays in the finalization of key governance deliverables are also constraining access to funding needed to advance the Portfolio's launch.

In follow-up to its April meeting, the Board reviewed and approved in principle the revised 2025 Goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the SO with the understanding that further refinements are needed to enhance clarity. It was also an opportunity to receive updates on key ongoing workstreams, including the two Working Groups on Incentives for Portfolio Funding (W1/2) and Innovative Finance Modalities, as well as the Governance Working Group that will finalize the CGIAR Internal Rules Framework and propose amendments to the CGIAR System Framework and the Charter of the System Organization.

At its meeting on 12 May, the IPB-AFRC concentrated on advancing the ROP. It commended the substantial progress made in strengthening CGIAR's assurance and risk management architecture, recognizing the extensive collaborative effort by management and Centers. The IPB-AFRC reviewed and endorsed a comprehensive package of ROP deliverables – including revised ethics and risk management policies and Terms of Reference for new integrated assurance functions – and recommended these for the Board's approval.

Other key matters discussed included a broad update on financial and operational oversight across CGIAR, reflecting on funding pressures, delivery performance, and assurance priorities. The Committee reviewed the 2024 Financial Statements of the SO and welcomed the strong 95% implementation rate in the final year of the three-year Portfolio, while requesting further analysis to assess alignment with delivery expectations. It noted deficits at two Centers and welcomed the contextual insights provided by Committee members serving on the respective Center Boards. To strengthen financial clarity, the Committee requested more detailed reporting on the use of exceptional funding mechanisms.

In its assurance role, the IPB-AFRC reiterated the urgency of system-wide cybersecurity coordination, including finalization of a CGIAR-wide policy, shared tools, and stronger enforcement of mandatory training. It welcomed the Global Leadership Team's increasing ownership of risk management and encouraged deeper integration of risk discussions into leadership agendas. It reviewed the draft annual report from the Ethics and Business Conduct Function. Finally, the Committee confirmed the election of Richard Golding as its Deputy Chair, welcoming his experience and commitment to advancing CGIAR's assurance agenda.

The IPB-AFRC Chair presented the Committee's recommendations and key messages to the Board. The Board echoed the strong appreciation for the significant efforts of management and staff from the Centers and the SO, as well as the collaborative engagement with Center AFRC Chairs, in delivering a substantial package of materials to advance implementation of the ROP. It acknowledged this as a marked step forward in strengthening CGIAR's assurance architecture, compared to past arrangements.

The Board welcomed the IPB-AFRC's recommendations and supported moving forward with approval of the ROP package. It was agreed, however, to pause finalization of one component – the Ethics & Business Conduct Escalation Framework – to allow for additional consultation and refinement in light of feedback from the System Council's Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC). It was supportive of the approach set in motion to address the concerns raised together with the Chairs of Center AFRCs and seek a path forward on this important document for the Integrated Partnership and for our Funders.

The Board underscored that the delay in finalizing the Escalation Framework is contributing to a hold-up in disbursing critical 2024 funding, placing operational pressure on Centers and limiting flexibility. It emphasized that resolving this blockage is essential to maintain momentum in implementing the 2025–2030 Portfolio and to enable effective alignment of resources with strategic priorities. The Board called for swift and collaborative engagement with the AOC to secure consensus and unlock funding without further delay.

On the recommendation of the IPB-AFRC, the Board approved the annual financial statements of the SO. The Board also approved the appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC France) as the external auditor of the SO for FY2025 and noted that the audit partner from PwC France will rotate from 2025.

The Board reaffirmed its strong commitment to the successful launch of the new Portfolio and called on all stakeholders — particularly Funders — to support this effort by providing flexible and predictable resources that enable adaptive and effective delivery.

Montpellier, 21 May 2025

A summary of decisions taken during the IPB and the IPB-AFRC meetings are provided in the **Annexes** to this communiqué.

Annex 1: IPB-005 Decisions

Decision Point Reference	Decision
IPB /M005/DP1	Pursuant to Article 8.3 of its Rules of Procedure, the Integrated Partnership Board adopted the agenda for its fifth meeting, held on 16 May 2025.
IPB /M005/DP2	Pursuant to article 7.1e of its Rules of Procedure and Article 9.7 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the Integrated Partnership Board approved the summary of its fourth meeting, held 11-12 April 2025.
IPB /M005/DP3	Pursuant to Articles 8.2(f) and 12.5 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the Integrated Partnership Board approved in principle the 2025 Key Performance Indicators and the 2025 goals for the CGIAR System Organization, subject to the incorporation of revisions as outlined during the Board’s discussion.
IPB /M005/DP4	<p>Pursuant to Article 8.2g of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the Integrated Partnership Board concurred with the following policies and recommended their submission to the System Council for approval (to take effect upon approval of the CGIAR Integrated Partnership Ethics & Business Conduct Escalation Framework):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Code of Ethics and Business Conduct for Personnel ii. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Policy iii. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Policy on Whistleblowing and Protection from Retaliation iv. CGIAR Integrated Partnership Policy on Protection Against Sexual Misconduct, Exploitation, Abuse, and Human Trafficking
IPB /M005/DP5	<p>Pursuant to Article 8.2h of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the Integrated Partnership Board approved the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference for the Integrated Partnership Internal Audit Function • Terms of Reference for the Integrated Partnership Risk and Internal Controls Function • Terms of Reference for the Integrated Partnership Ethics & Business Conduct Function

Decision Point Reference	Decision
IPB /M005/DP6	Pursuant to Article 8.2l of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the Integrated Partnership Board concurred with the Audited Financial Statements of the CGIAR System Organization for the 2024 financial year and recommended their submission to the System Council for approval.
IPB /M005/DP7	Pursuant to Article 8.2k of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, the Integrated Partnership Board approved the reappointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC France) as the external auditor of the CGIAR System Organization for the 2025 financial year.

Annex 2: IPB-AFRC-004 Decisions

Decision Point Reference	Decision
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP1	The IPB-AFRC adopted the agenda as set out in document IPB-AFRC-004-01b.
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP2	The IPB-AFRC approved the summary of the IPB-AFRC’s 3rd meeting, as issued on 5 May 2025.
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP3	Pursuant to Article 7e. of its Terms of Reference, the IPB-AFRC recommended to the IPB for its concurrence the CGIAR System Organization Audited Financial Statements for the 2024 financial year.
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP4	Pursuant to Article 7c. of its Terms of Reference, the IPB-AFRC recommended to the IPB the reappointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC France) as the external auditor of the CGIAR System Organization for the 2025 financial year.
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP5	Pursuant to Article 7c. of its Terms of Reference, the IPB-AFRC approved the System Organizations external auditor fees for FY 2025 of EUR 38,000.
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP6	Pursuant to articles 7i-j, 9f and 9k of its Terms of Reference, the IPB-AFRC recommended that the Integrated Partnership Board approve the following documents with effect from 1 July 2025: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms of Reference for the Integrated Partnership Internal Audit Function • Terms of Reference for the Integrated Partnership Risk and Internal Controls Function • Terms of Reference for the Integrated Partnership Ethics & Business Conduct Function
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP7	Pursuant to article 7a of its Terms of Reference, the IPB-AFRC endorsed the Revised External Auditing Guidelines (‘FG-3A’).
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP8	Pursuant to article 7c of its Terms of Reference, the IPB-AFRC approved the template auditor letter of engagement.
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP9	Pursuant to articles 9j and k of its Terms of Reference, the IPB-AFRC recommended the CGIAR Integrated Partnership Ethics & Business Conduct Escalation Framework to the Integrated Partnership Board for its concurrence.

Decision Point Reference	Decision
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP10	<p>Pursuant to article 9i of its Terms of Reference, the IPB-AFRC recommended the following policies to the Integrated Partnership Board for its concurrence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CGIAR Integrated Partnership Code of Ethics and Business Conduct for Personnel • CGIAR Integrated Partnership Anti-Harassment and Discrimination Policy • CGIAR Integrated Partnership Policy on Whistleblowing and Protection from Retaliation • CGIAR Integrated Partnership Policy on Protection Against Sexual Misconduct, Exploitation, Abuse, and Human Trafficking
IPB-AFRC/M004/DP11	<p>The IPB-AFRC appointed Richard Golding to serve as Deputy Chair of the IPB-AFRC until the expiry of his membership term (31 October 2027) or until a successor is appointed.</p>