

Chair's Summary¹ 23rd System Council meeting

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, 10-11 December 2025

Dear System Council Members, Active Observers, and Invited Guests,

We have entered an era of continual, rapid change. Technological advancements, shifting geopolitics, and climate shocks are impacting everyone, including CGIAR. Understanding and adjusting to these changes will be crucial if we are to fulfil our mission of delivering science and innovation that advance the transformation of food, land, and water systems in a climate crisis.

CGIAR is coming of age in this new world. Artificial intelligence (AI) presents enormous opportunities with profound implications but also brings new risks. We must evolve in the ways we interact, partner, and operate – staying streamlined and focused, but remaining flexible enough to rapidly respond to new challenges. It felt very appropriate that our 23rd System Council meeting convened in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE), a country that brings a unique dual perspective as an important funder leading the way in technological advancements, while still building its food and agriculture sector. UAE stepped up to join the Council at a difficult time; we commend them for bringing vital funding and partnerships to meet important challenges, rather than waiting for things to get easier. Since joining the Council just two years ago, UAE has helped launch a global consortium to control red palm weevil and, earlier this week, launched the Abu Dhabi AI Agriculture Ecosystem, which includes a new CGIAR AI Hub. In recognition of their increasingly important role on the Council, UAE was elected to Co-Chair the meeting.

One of the primary ways in which we must evolve is in how we fund agricultural research for development. The drastic funding cuts of 2025 demonstrated that we cannot rely solely on overseas development assistance. The new financing landscape presents new opportunities, and we must lean into efforts to diversify CGIAR funding through impact investing, public private partnerships, and innovative financing mechanisms such as guarantees and carbon credits. The Council endorsed the final reports of the Working Group on Incentives for Portfolio Funding and the Working Group on Innovative Finance Modalities.

Funding remains an important structural constraint but, in the face of this difficult funding environment, we applaud Council members for continuing to advocate for CGIAR's work and highlight its importance at the local, national, and regional levels. We were pleased to receive in-session funding commitments from Switzerland, for US\$15.5 million for 2025, while Norway committed 263.97 million Norwegian Krone for the 2026-2028 period. The Council approved the CGIAR Trust Fund Windows 1 and 2 Financing Plan and Budget for

¹ The Chair's Summary is prepared as an early record of key messages and decisions taken, in advance of the more detailed formal meeting summary that will be shared for System Council input and approval.

2026, took note of the CGIAR Trust Fund Windows 1 and 2 Financing projections for 2027, and approved the proposed approach to financing CGIAR System activities. Council members were also happy to learn about potential efficiency gains and applauded management's work on the global asset study, which will be an important tool in managing both assets and partnerships for the future.

Making a strong business case for CGIAR requires meaningful messages about CGIAR's impact. CGIAR's Chief Scientist presented the recent portfolio prioritization exercise, which enables strategic decision making and will help further develop the narrative on CGIAR's collective contribution to increasing food security for the world's most vulnerable people. Council members also received presentations from CGIAR's Advisory Bodies on their work to calculate rates of return, inform CGIAR's research prioritization process, and evaluate programs and ways of working. The Council endorsed the recommendations of its Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee's high-level review of CGIAR's Advisory Bodies and approved the consolidated 2025-2027 workplan and budget of the Independent Science for Development Council, Standing Panel on Impact Assessment, and Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service. Council members appreciated the robust evidence generated by these bodies, while noting the need for succinct results and stories that they can present to their Ministers, without caveats.

We have also made huge strides in addressing CGIAR's governance issues; the Council was pleased to approve the CGIAR Internal Rules Framework and amendments to the CGIAR System Framework, Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, and Standard Provisions. The Council also approved the CGIAR Ethics and Business Conduct Escalation Framework, with a request that it be revised by 31 October 2026 in line with the joint recommendations of the Council's Assurance Oversight Committee and Integrated Partnership Board's Audit, Finance and Risk Committee.

CGIAR is unique, with 15 independent, international Centers. Trying to create a synergy around that construct – and build trust among organizations that have historically competed with each other – is a huge challenge. It is clear that Centers do not feel adequately represented in the current board structure. We need to stabilize the System and address this problem, while ensuring that a thorough analysis of the problems and solutions is conducted. As a first step, the Council approved several core elements to guide the optimization of CGIAR's governance, for implementation by 1 July 2026, and appointed the current Chair of the General Assembly of Centers as a member of the Integrated Partnership Board.

Climate change remains one of the defining challenges of our time. As we move towards next year's UN climate change conference, COP31, to be hosted by Türkiye with Australia leading negotiations, I encourage both CGIAR management and System Council members to engage strongly with our Turkish and Australian partners to ensure that we make incremental progress on our work to both mitigate against and adapt to climate change. In light of this important event, and at the kind invitation of Türkiye's Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the System Council will next convene in Antalya, Türkiye, in June 2026.

This meeting marks my last meeting as Chair of CGIAR's System Council. It has been a huge privilege to sit in the Chair's seat since 2016, and I appreciate the trust placed in me by the Council. We have overcome challenges together and made progress, and I've no doubt that the Council will continue to meet the future difficulties thrown at the CGIAR System. Things are getting harder, for more people, every day. CGIAR must continue evolving and improving to meet these challenges, and doing so will require an open mind for new ideas. I am delighted to hand over the Chair's gavel to Renaud Seligmann, Director for Strategy and Operations in the World Bank's Planet Vice Presidency, who was approved as the new System Council Chair and who I've no doubt will excel at steering CGIAR in pursuit of the highest standards of governance, research excellence, and impact.

Yours sincerely,

Juergen Voegele, Ph.D.

Chair, System Council

Appendix 1 – Decisions taken and Agreed positions and actions

DECISIONS

SC23-DP1 – Appointment of Meeting Co-Chair

The System Council appointed Her Excellency Mariam bint Mohammed Almheiri, System Council voting member representing the United Arab Emirates, as the non-voting Co-Chair for the 23rd System Council meeting, pursuant to Article 5.2 of the CGIAR System Framework.

SC23-DP2 – Adoption of the Agenda

The System Council adopted the Agenda for the 23rd System Council meeting, as issued on 26 November 2025.

SC23-DP3 – Optimization of CGIAR Governance Structures

Pursuant to Article 6.1 of the CGIAR System Framework, the System Council approved the following core elements to guide the optimization of CGIAR's governance, to be implemented by 1 July 2026 at the latest:

1. The Integrated Partnership Board (IPB) will be composed in the majority of Center Board Chairs as voting members. A significant number of independent voting members will also serve on the IPB. All IPB members will have a fiduciary responsibility to act in the interests of the Integrated Partnership as a whole.
2. Both the IPB Chair and IPB-AFRC Chair should be drawn from the independent members of the IPB.
3. The Nominations Committee of the System Council will become a Committee of the IPB (with appropriate handover), and the IPB (rather than the System Council) will be responsible for appointing voting members of the IPB.
4. The General Assembly of Centers (GAC) Co-Chair (the Convener of the Center Board Chairs) is appointed to the IPB by the System Council at SC23 for an interim period of 6 months.
5. Upon implementation of the revised IPB membership, the GAC will be disbanded.
6. Commencing 1 January 2026, the System Council Chair will lead a transition phase, working with the IPB interim Chair, the GAC and the Governance Working Group to translate the approved core elements into a model to be approved by System Council for implementation by 1 July 2026. This will include the following activities:
 - i. A review of the lessons learned shared by key stakeholder groups (IPB, GAC, System Council, EMD);
 - ii. An analysis of the legal and institutional implications of the changes (including, but not limited to, the AFRC composition, impact on governing instruments and amendments required – including the CGIAR System Framework and Charter, clear rules of procedure to guide IPB decision making including management of conflicts of interest, the role of the System Council in review of IPB independent member candidates);
 - iii. The Nominations Committee of the System Council will identify and propose qualified independent candidates, one of whom could serve as IPB Chair, for appointment by the reconstituted IPB; and

- iv. The Center Board Chairs will work out modalities of their representation at IPB in order to ensure an equitable, representative and diverse set of constituencies.

SC23-DP4 – Integrated Partnership Board membership

Pursuant to Article 6.2 d) of the CGIAR System Framework, and aligned to the decision taken on optimization of CGIAR's governance at the 23rd System Council meeting, the System Council appointed Prof. Roel Merckx as a voting member of the Integrated Partnership Board (IPB) with effect from 1 January 2026 to serve a term of 6 months or until such time as modalities of Center Board Chairs' ex officio membership of the IPB are implemented (the latter of the two).

The System Council strongly recommends that the IPB elect Prof. Merckx as interim Chair of the IPB from 1 January 2026 until such time as an independent IPB member is elected as IPB Chair.

SC23-DP5 – Report from the Nominations Committee of the System Council

The System Council endorsed conducting an assessment of the Integrated Partnership Board by Q4 2026, based on the KPIs approved by the NCSC.

SC23-DP6 – Governance & Policy Matters

The System Council:

- i. Approved the CGIAR Internal Rules Framework, following concurrence of the Integrated Partnership Board, pursuant to Article 6.2 i) of the CGIAR System Framework;
- ii. Approved the amendments to the CGIAR System Framework, pursuant to Article 16 of the Framework;
- iii. Approved the amendments to the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, pursuant to Article 15.2 of the Charter; and
- iv. Approved the amendments to the Standard Provisions annexed to the funding agreements related to the use of funds from the CGIAR Trust Fund, following concurrence of the Integrated Partnership Board, pursuant to the amendment provisions set out in paragraph 17 therein;

all the above with effect from 1 January 2026, and subject to the CGIAR Internal Rules Framework and all amendments set forth above being effective on that date.

SC23-DP7 – Governance & Policy Matters

The System Council approved the CGIAR Ethics and Business Conduct Escalation Framework, following concurrence of the Integrated Partnership Board, pursuant to Article 6.2 i) of the CGIAR System Framework.

The System Council endorsed the joint statement of the IPB-AFRC and AOC and requested that the Ethics & Business Conduct Escalation Framework be revised by 31 October 2026 in line with the recommendations set out therein.

SC23-DP8 – Report from the Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee

The System Council endorsed the recommendations made by the Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee arising from its high-level review of CGIAR's advisory bodies, as set out in meeting document SC23-09.

SC23-DP9 – Report from the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES)

The System Council approved the consolidated 2025-2027 workplan and budget of ISDC, SPIA and IAES, pursuant to Article 6.2 g of the CGIAR System Framework

SC23-DP10 – CGIAR Windows 1 and 2 Budget for 2026-2027

Following concurrence of the Integrated Partnership Board, and pursuant to Articles 6.2(q) and 6.2(s) of the CGIAR System Framework, the System Council:

- i. Approved the CGIAR Trust Fund Windows 1 and 2 Financing Plan and Budget for 2026 for CGIAR Research and other activities;
- ii. Took note of the CGIAR Trust Fund Windows 1 and 2 Financing projections for 2027 for CGIAR Research and other activities; and
- iii. Approved the proposed approach to financing CGIAR System activities, including administrative and governance functions.

SC23-DP11 – Report from Finance Working Groups

The System Council endorsed the final reports of the Working Group on Incentives for Portfolio Funding (W1&2), including cost-sharing mechanisms and the Working Group on Innovative Finance Modalities.

SC23-DP12 – ISDC Membership Renewal and Appointment

Pursuant to Article 6.2 g) of the CGIAR System Framework, the System appointed:

- i. Dr. David R. Just as a member of CGIAR's Independent Science for Development Council for a second three-year term with effect from 1 January 2026;
- ii. Dr. Glenn Fitzgerald as a member of CGIAR's Independent Science for Development Council for a three-year term (subject to renewal) with effect from 1 January 2026.

SC23-DP13 – System Council Chair

Pursuant to Article 5.1 of the CGIAR System Framework, the System Council accepted the World Bank nomination and approved the appointment of Renaud Seligmann, Director for Strategy and Operations, Planet Vice Presidency, World Bank Group, to serve as the System Council Chair for a four-year term with effect from 1 January 2026, and as Acting Chair with effect from 16 December 2025 until 31 December 2025.

ACTIONS

SC23-AP1 – Report from the Assurance Oversight Committee

The System Council requested that a formal joint communication be shared with the System Council by the IPB-AFRC and AOC on the conclusion of recent ethics matters overseen by the two committees.

SC23-AP2 – System Council Membership

The System Council acknowledged the Global Crop Diversity Trust's unique role with CGIAR genebanks, and proposed that its role on the System Council be assured as either an ex-officio non-voting member or active observer through amendment to the CGIAR System Framework.

Appendix 2 - Participants

Meeting Leadership		Key: <i>(*) indicates that voting member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by the alternate</i> <i>(**) indicates that voting member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by another delegated representative</i> <i>(v) indicates virtual participation</i>	
Chair: Juergen Voegele Co-Chair: H.E. Mariam Almheiri (day 1 only), Fatema Almulla (United Arab Emirates)			
System Council Voting Members (listed alphabetically)	Member representative	Member Alternates & Other Delegation Members	
African Development Bank	Innocent Musabyimana* (V) (day 2 only)		
Australia	Bosibori Bett*		
Canada	Flora Mak*		
Crop Trust & IFAD	Stefan Schmitz (Crop Trust)	Pieterneel Boogaard (V) (IFAD) Other delegates: Anne Clyne (Crop Trust), Jaspreet Stamm (Crop Trust)	
East Asia & Pacific	Datuk Seri Isham bin Ishak (Malaysia)	Wenbo Liu (China) Other delegates: Ming Ern Lee, Vaani Muniandy (Malaysia)	
European Commission	Christophe Larose		
Gates Foundation	Martien van Nieuwkoop	Ruben Echeverria Other delegates: Rinn Self, Mariana Kim	
Germany	Ina von Frantzius	Anna Berg (V) Other delegates: Joachim Langbein, Sarah Schmidt (V), Aliénor De Cuypère (V)	
India	M.L. Jat		
Latin America and Caribbean	Pedro Machado (Brazil)	Gerardo Marchesini (Uruguay)	
The Netherlands	Timmo Gaasbeek		
Norway	Asta Ingvild Langhus		
South Asia	Mohammad Saifullah** (Bangladesh)	Dayarathna Pushpakum Wickramasinghe (V) (Sri Lanka)	
Sub-Saharan Africa	Abubakar Dabban Adamu (Nigeria)	Carolyn Minayo** (Kenya)	
Switzerland	Manfred Kaufmann		
United Kingdom of Great Britain & Northern Ireland	Laura Munro	Alan Tollervey	
West Asia & North Africa	Mustafa Altuğ Atalay (Türkiye)	Hassan Momeni (Iran) Other delegates: Didem Kökden (Türkiye)	
The World Bank	Renaud Seligmann	Shoba Shetty Other delegate: Marianne Grosclaude	

Temporary Voting Members	Member	Alternate & Other Delegates
Belgium	Carol Durieux	Boudewijn Vandebosche
Denmark	Hanne Carus	
Ireland	Mark Montgomery	Isabella Rae (V)
United Arab Emirates	H.E. Mariam Almheiri	Fatema Almulla Other delegates: Kristofer Hamel, Ghaya Almusalli, Shatha Alaydaroos, Moza Al Dhaheri

Non-voting Ex-officio members	Member	Other Delegates
CGIAR Integrated Partnership Board	Patrick Caron (V)	Clarissa van Heerden
CGIAR Executive Managing Director	Ismahane Elouafi	
Center/Alliance Representative 1: Convener of the Center Board Chairs	Helen Hambly**	Roel Merckx (V) (day 1 only)
Center/Alliance Representative 2: Convener of the Center Directors General	Essam Mohammed	
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	Selvaraju Ramasamy	

Active Observers	Representative	Alternate & Other Delegates
Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAIR)	Ravi Khetarpal	Jane Kane Potaka
CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)	Lesley Torrance	Other delegates: Nompumelelo Obokoh, Bhavani Shankar, Ingrid Fromm
Sweden	AnnaKarin Norling	

Invited Guests	Representative	Alternate & Other Delegates
France (with voting rights)	Bernard Hubert	Jean Albergel
Japan	Takayuki Kawakami (V) (day 1 only)	Other delegates: Kaori Fujita (V), Yukari Haruna (V), Masa Iwanaga (V), Satoshi Nozawa (V), Ayano Tanabe (V)
Mexico	Víctor Manuel Villalobos Arámbula	
CGIAR Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC)	Honore Ndoko**	Other delegates: Rita O'Sullivan
CGIAR Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)	Travis Lybbert	
Trustee of the CGIAR Trust Fund (World Bank)	Laurent Achi	

System Council Secretary
Sylvia Oyinlola, Global Head, CGIAR System Council Support

Additional participants	Name/Role/Organization
System Council Chair Adviser	Jonathan Wadsworth

Additional participants	Name/Role/Organization
CGIAR Global Leadership Team (additional to the EMD and Convenor of the Centers Directors General)	Sandra Milach, Chief Scientist
	Aly Abousabaa, Director General, ICARDA
	Bram Govaerts, Director General, CIMMYT
	Juan Lucas Restrepo, Director General, Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT
CGIAR Staff (invited to all sessions)	Micheline Ayoub, Chief of Staff, CGIAR System Organization
	Elbert Hidding, Integrated Partnership Internal Audit Executive (V)
	Christine Larson-Luhila, Deputy Director, Governance and Institutional Risk, CGIAR System Organization (V)
	Luis Felipe Mendes, Director, Finance and Digital Services, CGIAR System Organization
	Elise Perset, General Counsel and Director, Legal Services, CGIAR System Organization
	Michiel Roovers, Director, Governance and Institutional Risk, CGIAR System Organization (V)
	Roland Sundstrom, Practice Lead, Program Delivery, CGIAR System Organization
	André Zandstra, Director, Resource Mobilization & Business Development, CGIAR System Organization (V)
CGIAR System Council Secretariat	Emma Quilligan, Senior Manager, System Council Support; AOC and SIMEC Secretary
	Olwen Cussen, Governance Advisor, CGIAR System Organization and Secretary to the General Assembly of Centers
CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service (IAES)	Allison Smith, Director, Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service
European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development (EIARD) Secretary	Nienke Bientema

Session specific invitees	
Agenda item 4	Amy Beaudreault, Lead, ISDC Secretariat (V)
Agenda item 5	Cristina Rumbaitis del Rio, Co-Chair NCSC (V)
Agenda item 6	Cristina Rumbaitis del Rio, Co-Chair NCSC (V)
Agenda item 7	Amy Beaudreault, Lead, ISDC Secretariat (V)
Agenda item 8	Thomas Moritz, Senior Legal Advisor, System Organization (V)
Agenda item 9	Amy Beaudreault, Lead, ISDC Secretariat (V)
	Thomas Miethbauer, SIMEC Member (V)
Agenda item 11	Amy Beaudreault, Lead, ISDC Secretariat (V)
Agenda item 12	Amy Beaudreault, Lead, ISDC Secretariat (V)
	Thomas Miethbauer, SIMEC Member (V)
Agenda item 15	Gail Amare, Senior Manager, Operations, CGIAR System Organization (V)
Agenda item 16	Nicoline De Haan, Director, Gender Equality and Inclusion Accelerator (V)
Agenda item 17	Rebecca Williams, Director, People and Culture, CGIAR System Organization (V)

Event support
Victoria Pezzi, Meeting and Events Officer, CGIAR System Organization
Vashna Singh, Meetings and Events Consultant, CGIAR System Organization