

CGIAR System Board Communiqué

CGIAR System Board discusses key science, budget and governance matters at 28th meeting in Paris

The CGIAR System Board convened for its 28th meeting in Paris on 23 and 24 March 2024. The meeting focused on planning an ambitious and impactful CGIAR research portfolio through 2030, discussing and approving the W1 revised budget, discussing the implementation of the Unified Governance Review recommendations and addressing key organizational matters.

The Board was pleased to have CGIAR's new Executive Managing Director (EMD), Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, and Deputy EMD, Mr. Guillaume Grosso, participate in their first official System Board meeting since taking on their roles. The EMD presented her vision for CGIAR, emphasizing the need to elevate CGIAR's ambitions while building on the progress made and feedback received on the current portfolio. She presented the CGIAR 2024 three main priorities: i) deliver relevant and impactful research and innovation with our partners; ii) elevate CGIAR's funding and visibility on the global agendas; and iii) ensure that CGIAR is fit-for-purpose and efficiently organised.

Science

Dr. Elouafi, together with Science Group Managing Directors Dr. Vermeulen and Prof. Djikeng, set out a course for a far more ambitious and impactful research portfolio. It aims to maximize CGIAR's impact against five Impact Areas and relevant SDGs through a set of global, thematic, deeply interconnected 'Megaprograms' that work alongside partners to catalyze food, land, and water systems transformations. The 'Megaprograms' integrate the full range of CGIAR's capabilities and funding streams to address global, grand challenges. The Board thoroughly discussed the process and expressed firm support for creating an ambitious portfolio, also recognizing that with the new approach it will be easier to assess how well the portfolio delivers against the research and innovation strategy. Furthermore, the Board provided guidance for the Writing Teams crafting the 'Megaprograms'.

Budget matters

The Deputy EMD, Mr. Grosso, presented the revised budget that has several new features, including explicit alignment of the proposed budget with CGIAR's overarching goals for the year and more clarity and transparency in the breakdown of available resources. Building on the latest financial insights, the revised budget contains a Baseline scenario and a Surge Scenario should potential revenues materialize in full. The Board welcomed the Window 1 revised budget and noted its appreciation for the considerable improvements brought in just few weeks. The Board approved the Window 1 revised budget for submission to the System Council.

UGR implementation

The Board recommends to the parties that on 1 July 2024: 1) the Integrated Partnership Board ('IPB') becomes effective; 2) the Center Boards are reconstituted with two IPB members and one Partnership AFRC member instead of the current seven System Board members; and 3) the changes to the System Framework and the Charter of the System Organization become effective.

Additionally, the Board deliberated on establishing an ad hoc Nominations Committee for the Integrated Partnership Board Audit, Finance, and Risk Committee to ensure a transition for oversight in these critical areas.

Furthermore, the Board discussed the updated CGIAR Engagement Framework for Partnerships & Advocacy and the new Partnerships Strategy. These initiatives aim to harness the collective strength of partnerships to drive innovation and impact by fostering collaboration, leveraging shared resources, and aligning efforts towards common goals.

As CGIAR embarks on this ambitious journey to 2030, the System Board is committed to working closely with all stakeholders to ensure a successful transition to the Integrated Partnership Board and deliver a research portfolio that drives innovation, impact, and sustainability in food, land, and water systems worldwide.

We look forward to continued engagement and collaboration in the coming months as we work together to advance CGIAR's mission and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

On behalf of the System Board,
Prof. Lindiwe Majele Sibanda, Chair

Annex: Advisory note and Resolutions

Advisory Note

Resolutions on implementation of the 'UGR Memo'

1. The System Board convened in Paris on 23-24 March 2024. A key topic on the Board's agenda was reviewing the process and progress of implementation of the UGR Memo.
2. The Board acknowledged that a delay has occurred in implementing the recommendations of the UGR Memo. The Board was pleased to note that the cause of the delay has now been resolved and it considered how to keep the process streamlined and on track. Discussions were guided at all times by the UGR Memo – and acting in the spirit of the IFA.
3. To deliver on what was agreed by the parties in the Memo, some responsibilities that the Memo assigns to the IPB need to be undertaken urgently, i.e. before the IPB is fully reconstituted. One example is reformulating the Board's own audit, finance and risk committee (the Partnership AFRC) to ensure that a gap does not arise in oversight in these key areas (resolution 4).
4. The Board is of the view that, where needed and in the spirit of the Memo, the System Board should already act on behalf of the IPB (until it is reconstituted) to ensure timely implementation of the UGR recommendations. For that reason, the Board asks for all Parties to agree to this overall principle where action by the IPB is needed before its full reconstitution.
5. The Board is also of the opinion that a 'single-step' approach to changing the governing instruments on 1 July 2024 is preferred (resolution 2(i)) by integrating the tranche 1 and tranche 2 changes into a single set of changes. This provides maximum clarity to all stakeholders on the effective date of the changes. In addition, it allows the parties to review all changes in a coherent way.
6. The Memo recommends elevating the authority to appoint members of the Integrated Partnership Board from the Board itself to the System Council. With the single-step approach this recommendation becomes effective on 1 July 2024. To avoid delays in the nominations and appointment process, the Board delegated the appointment authority to the System Council before the governing documents are amended (resolution 1).
7. The Board recommended that the effective date of appointments to the IPB – and the reconstitution of the Center Boards – take effect on the same date as well (1 July 2024). In considering this carefully, the Board was mindful of the importance of a robust and credible search and appointment process. It considered the need for time and the need for consultation with the Center Boards which IPB candidate will sit on each Center Board. The date of 1 July 2024 leaves time for a thorough process and for discussion where other, shorter scenarios don't (resolution 2 (ii) and (iii)).
8. In addition, the Board was mindful of questions from some Centers on whose Boards the common members are 'ex officio'. The Board agreed that the current System Board members would continue to serve until such time as their seats are filled (by IPB members or Center-specific members) to give that comfort where needed (resolution 3).

9. The Board believes that this overall approach means moving in unison towards a 1 July 2024 transition date in the true spirit of a partnership – and we hope that all IFA Parties and the System Council agree this is a pragmatic approach.
10. With that in mind, the resolutions that follow set out the Board’s recommended approach to stay on course.

Resolution 1

The CGIAR System Board, pursuant to its authorities under Article 7.6 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, requests the System Council to:

- i. Form a Nominations Committee and approve its Terms of Reference and membership to undertake a search and selection process in line with the stipulations of the CGIAR Memorandum on the implementation of governance recommendations; and
- ii. Make decisions on appointments to the Integrated Partnership Board with effect from 1 July 2024 pending finalization and approval of amendments to the System Framework and Charter of the CGIAR System Organization.

Resolution 2

The System Board recommends a 1 July 2024 effective date for decisions on the following matters:

- i. *By the System Council, System Board and CGIAR Centers:* A single set of amendments to the CGIAR System Framework and the Charter of the System Organization to fully enact the provisions of the CGIAR Memorandum on the implementation of governance recommendations;
- ii. *By the System Council:* Term start dates of all members of the Integrated Partnership Board; and
- iii. *By CGIAR Centers:* Term start dates of all appointments by CGIAR Center Boards of members to fill the vacancies arising after the end of the terms of the current System Board members on 30 June 2024, including of two members of the future Integrated Partnership Board.

Resolution 3

The System Board resolves that where the System Board members are ex officio members of a Center Board, those members will remain members of the Center Board until such time as the Center Board appoints two members of the Integrated Partnership Board in a manner consistent with the process outlined in the CGIAR Memorandum on the implementation of governance recommendations (Part A, Section 3(b) (i)).

Resolution 4

The System Board:

- i. Approves, pursuant to article 9.11 of the Charter of the System Organization and subject to the IFA Parties and the System Council agreeing, the System Board acting on behalf of the Integrated Partnership Board to reformulate its Audit, Finance & Risk Committee in line with the approach set out in the CGIAR Memorandum on the implementation of governance recommendations;
- ii. Approves the terms of reference for the Ad Hoc Nominations Committee for the Partnership AFRC;
- iii. Approves the engagement of a search firm to identify candidates for the Partnership AFRC;
and
- iv. Agrees to nominate two System Board members to sit as its representatives on the Ad Hoc Nominations Committee for the Partnership AFRC.
