

Meeting Summary  
19<sup>th</sup> System Council meeting  
Rabat, Morocco, 20-21 October 2023

**Purpose:**

This document presents the formal meeting summary for the System Council's 19<sup>th</sup> meeting ('SC19'), as approved by the System Council on a no objection basis with effect from Monday 8 January 2024 (Decision Reference SC/M19/EDP3).

It supplements the [SC19 Chair's Summary](#) (issued 27 October 2023) that confirmed decisions taken and agreed actions during the meeting.

**Distribution notice:** This document may be distributed without restriction.

**Prepared by:** System Council Secretariat

## Introduction

This document presents a summary of the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of the System Council ('Council') held on 20-21 October 2023 in Rabat, Morocco. It follows the release of the SC19 Chair's Summary (27 October 2023).

### By way of overview:

**Format:** The meeting was held as an in-person meeting, with some virtual participation over two consecutive working days: Friday 20 October and Saturday 21 October 2023.

**Agenda items:** The meeting covered agenda items within twenty-two (22) sessions set out in the table of contents on the following page.

**Decisions:** The Council took five (5) decisions and agreed on five (5) action points during its meeting, as initially recorded in the SC19 Chair's Summary and reproduced in sequence in this summary.

**Participants:** Annex 1 sets out a list of meeting participants.

**Basis of preparation:** Pursuant to Article 9.2(a) of the [System Council Rules of Procedure](#), the Secretariat shall not produce a verbatim record of proceedings. The following document therefore neither attributes interventions, nor reproduces direct quotes of an individual System Council member, Active Observer, or other invited guest.

Contents — *Listed in the order that they were taken in the Agenda*

Agenda Item 1: Meeting Opening .....	4
Agenda Item 2: Reflections from the System Board Chair.....	5
Agenda Item 3: Reflections from the Interim Executive Managing Director .....	7
Agenda Item 4: Operationalizing the CGIAR Integration Framework Agreement: Progress Update on the 2022-2024 Integration Plan .....	8
Spotlight Session — CGIAR's Scientists .....	9
Agenda Item 5: 2025-2027 Portfolio Design Process .....	10
Agenda Item 6: CGIAR Financial Plan – Learning from 2023 and Planning for 2024 .....	14
Spotlight Session — CGIAR's Scientists .....	15
Agenda Item 7: Funding Modalities .....	15
Agenda Item 8: Funding CGIAR's Genebanks.....	17
Agenda Item 9: Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization.....	17
Agenda Item 12: Gender in CGIAR's Research .....	19
Agenda Item 13: Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion in CGIAR's Workplaces .....	20
<i>Day 2 Opening .....</i>	22
Agenda Item 11: System Council Composition .....	23
Agenda Item 14: Ethics and Business Conduct.....	25
Spotlight Session — CGIAR's Scientists .....	27
Agenda Item 15: Update on CapSha .....	27
Agenda Item 16: Regions and Partnerships .....	29
Agenda Item 17: Harnessing Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation in CGIAR.....	31
Spotlight Session — CGIAR's Scientists .....	32
Agenda Item 18: Report from the Assurance Oversight Committee .....	32
Agenda Item 19: Report from the Strategic Impact, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee.	34
Agenda Item 20: Planning 2024 independent advising and evaluative evidence for System Council .....	35
Agenda Item 21: Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) in 2024 .....	37
Agenda Item 10: Update on Unified Governance Review .....	39
Agenda Item 22: Other Business and Meeting Close .....	41
Annex 1: Participant List.....	42

## Agenda Item 1: Meeting Opening

1. The meeting was opened by Jonathan Wadsworth, Advisor to the System Council ('Council') Chair, who welcomed Council voting members<sup>1</sup>, alternate members, and guests on behalf of the Council's non-voting Chair, Juergen Voegele. He presented the Chair's apologies for his absence and explained that the Chair had been called on short notice to participate in pivotal negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Transitional Committee on Loss and Damage in Aswan, Egypt. He would, however, join the Council meeting on its second day.
2. On behalf of the Chair, Jonathan Wadsworth welcomed the new voting members and alternates in place of voting representatives:
  - a. Representing Australia, Wendy Umberger (attending virtually); and
  - b. Representing Japan, Kosuke Minakuchi, serving as the voting member.
3. He also extended a special welcome to first time participants, including:
  - a. Andrew Campbell, CGIAR interim Executive Managing Director;
  - b. Rodrigo Ubaldo Riojas Martinez, acting as the alternate for Mexico;
  - c. Stefan Schmitz, representing the Crop Trust;
  - d. Shantanu Mathur, representing the International Fund for Agricultural Development ('IFAD') (attending virtually); and
  - e. Travis Lybbert, Chair of the CGIAR Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA) (attending virtually).
4. There was a call to nominate two Co-Chairs for day one of the meeting, in the absence of the Council Chair.

### 5. **Decision SC19-DP1: Appointment of meeting Co-Chairs**

The System Council appointed Dr. Metin Türker of Türkiye, System Council member representing Turkey, as the non-voting Co-Chair for the 19th System Council meeting, pursuant to Article 5.2 of the CGIAR System Framework. Dr. Stefan Kachelriess-Matthess, System Council delegate representing Germany, was appointed as an additional Co-Chair (second Co-Chair) for day one only.

6. The Co-Chairs opened the meeting. A quorum was present.
7. Dr. Türker expressed his honor in serving as Co-Chair of the meeting and conveyed gratitude, on behalf of the Council, to Mr. Aly Abousabaa, Director General (DG) of the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas ('ICARDA') and to those who contributed to organizing the Council meeting. He anticipated two days of discussions, collaborative efforts, and moments of reflection. Dr. Türker also acknowledged recent earthquakes in Türkiye and Morocco and offered sincere condolences for lives lost. He also emphasized the importance of resilience and adaptability in advancing CGIAR's mission.

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<sup>1</sup> Composition : <https://www.cgiar.org/how-we-work/governance/system-council/sc-composition/>

8. Dr. Stefan Kachelriess-Matthess expressed gratitude for the honor to co-chair the meeting. He observed that each Council meeting offers an excellent opportunity to explore crucial agenda items that address global challenges within an ever-evolving context.
9. Formally tabling the provisional agenda, the second Co-Chair noted the shift of the two gender-related sessions to day one and the discussion of the Unified Governance Review Workshop to day two, to benefit from the Council Chair's perspective during this important discussion. Agenda item numbers remained the same with revised timings and an additional item (13a) titled 'Reflections on Research Direction & Funding.' No declarations of interest were made on the agenda and no items of other business were requested by Council members.

10. **Decision SC19-DP2: Adoption of the Agenda**

The System Council adopted the Agenda, as re-issued on 18 October 2023 with revised timings and an additional item 13a titled 'Reflections on Research Direction & Funding.'

**Agenda Item 2: Reflections from the System Board Chair**

11. The Co-Chair invited the System Board Chair to share her reflections. In her remarks, the System Board Chair highlighted themes of gratitude, commitment, collaboration, and significant progress. She reiterated appreciation to the ICARDA DG and his team for hosting the Council meeting and for organizing the prior day's field visit. This visit exemplified the collaborative efforts of CGIAR and ICARDA to enhance food systems' productivity, sustainability, and equity in the face of climate change. The System Board Chair acknowledged ICARDA's substantial contributions through [CGIAR's Research and Innovation Strategy](#) and [Portfolio of Research Initiatives](#). She also recognized the enduring partnership with the government of Morocco and extended condolences for the recent earthquake's tragic impact.
12. The System Board Chair highlighted the Unified Governance Review ('UGR') workshop held earlier in the week, which was attended by a wide spectrum of participants including Council and System Board members, Center Board Chairs, Directors General, and Host Country representatives. The workshop underscored a dedicated commitment to CGIAR's integrated partnership, the implementation of reforms, and the enhancement of the current governance model, to ensure it is fit-for-purpose. There was a collective consensus not to revisit past debates.
13. The System Board Chair reported progress made across eight priority areas for the System Board:
  - a. Effective System Board operations;
  - b. Strengthened relationships between System Board and Center Board Chairs;
  - c. Effective delivery of core business by scientists and global directors;
  - d. Improvements in efficiency and effectiveness of System Office;
  - e. Strengthening relationships with host countries and partners;
  - f. Communicating and advocating for 'One CGIAR';

- g. Engaging with System Council to clarify roles and responsibilities; and
  - h. Mobilizing financial resources.
14. The System Board Chair highlighted the signing of CGIAR's Integration Framework Agreement ('IFA') by the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics ('ICRISAT'), reinforcing CGIAR's integrated partnership and collective efforts for agricultural transformation, food security, and addressing the climate crisis. She pointed out the completion of the critical deliverable of the System Board this year, with the appointment of Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, and expressed gratitude for the interim EMD's contributions during the transition. The System Board Chair also mentioned ongoing high-level engagement with funders, active participation in global and regional events, prestigious recognitions and awards for CGIAR scientists, and the opportunity to shape an ambitious next research portfolio while mobilizing necessary funding.
15. In closing, the System Board Chair called on Council members to support and challenge CGIAR and hold it to account as an integrated partnership.

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

16. Council participants echoed their appreciation to ICARDA and the government of Morocco for hosting the Council meeting. They praised the collaboration between CGIAR and the national agricultural research and extension systems ('NARES') of Morocco as exemplified by Morocco's agricultural transformation journey, serving as a model for capacity building, engagement, and strategic partnerships. Additional reflections included:
- a. Recognition of the System Board Chair's leadership, adept relationship building, and swift progress on key priorities, including her leadership in the Board's appointment of the new EMD;
  - b. Acknowledgement of the System Board Chair's impactful work, enthusiasm, and commitment to changing the tone of the integration dialogue;
  - c. Appreciation for the System Board Chair's role in facilitating ICRISAT's integration into CGIAR through the IFA, fostering inclusivity and enhanced collaboration;
  - d. Strong affirmation for continuing to pursue efficiencies within CGIAR structures, with a focus on updating the compositions of the System Board and Center Boards, harnessing the positive spirit from the UGR workshop's commitments to an integrated, fit-for-purpose, mission-driven 'One CGIAR';
  - e. Acknowledgment of research and innovation's pivotal role in addressing pressing concerns such as food security, climate change, livelihoods, natural resource sustainability, and biodiversity preservation; and
  - f. Emphasis on CGIAR's integrated system value proposition as a strategic response to global challenges, and advocacy for increased funding to amplify CGIAR's impact in addressing these pressing issues.

### Agenda Item 3: Reflections from the Interim Executive Managing Director

17. At the invitation of the second Co-Chair, the interim EMD shared his priorities as set by the Board, including ensuring a smooth transition before the new EMD, Ismahane Elouafi, takes office in December. He discussed the CGIAR integration reforms, research portfolio priorities, core assets funding needs, and establishing system-wide performance metrics and accountability.
18. He recognized the importance of the partnership between the Moroccan government, ICARDA and CGIAR, particularly its real-world impact in addressing food security challenges in drought-vulnerable regions, which was a key focus of the previous day's field visit. The field visit also underscored the vital roles of women and youth as change agents and co-development partners.
19. The interim EMD reflected on the week leading up to the Council meeting, highlighting unanimous support for 'One CGIAR' principles emerging from the UGR workshop and emphasizing the need for continued adaptation in response to complex global food security challenges. He acknowledged substantial progress in integration efforts with the IFA as a significant milestone, while recognizing that there was still significant work ahead, given varying stages of integration across different parts of the organization. He emphasized that staff serving in blended global and individual Center roles exemplify this commitment to integration, putting 'One CGIAR' principles into practice.
20. The interim EMD highlighted that CGIAR has various levels of integration that may not be readily visible to funders. This includes integration at the science level, with the Science Group Managing Directors committed to system-wide coordination. The key role of CGIAR's [Senior Leadership Team](#) ('SLT') in driving collaboration across CGIAR, including substantial recent agreements to increase operational cohesion.
21. Moreover, he stressed the focus on research priorities and portfolio optimization during the SLT retreat, guided by the Eschborn principles<sup>2</sup>. The need for increased resources, greater funding flexibility, and system-level management was emphasized over a Center-by-Center or activity-specific basis.
22. The interim EMD emphasized the importance of developing and implementing a sustainable budget model, as well as comprehensive system-wide key performance indicators (KPIs) covering financial, operational, research, and impact metrics. Accountability was highlighted as critical for individual Centers and the entire CGIAR system, with a focus on transparency, efficiency, and demonstrating value for money. He also stressed the need to secure funder support to allocate additional resources, preferably through Window 1 pooled funding, to address global challenges at a portfolio level.

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<sup>2</sup> Internal principles, as agreed during the Eschborn informal Funder-led workshop, February 2020, and set out on page 18 of [meeting document SC11-04a](#).

*Key Discussion Areas*

23. Council participants expressed appreciation for the interim EMD's presentation and his role in driving CGIAR reform and revitalizing IFA negotiations with ICRISAT. Key reflections included:
  - a. Gratitude for the smooth transition from the former EMD, Claudia Sadoff, to the interim EMD, praising both for their exceptional work in championing reform and integration;
  - b. Acknowledgment of the interim EMD's crucial role as CGIAR's gender champion, highlighting the remarkable progress made in advancing gender-related initiatives; and
  - c. Recognition of the need for transparent funding approaches that actively involve funders in CGIAR's transformative journey.

**Agenda Item 4: Operationalizing the CGIAR Integration Framework Agreement: Progress Update on the 2022-2024 Integration Plan**

24. At the invitation of the second Co-Chair, the Interim EMD provided an update on the 2022-2024 Integration Plan to apprise the Council on advancement, risks, and requisite management action.
25. The presentation outlined that over the first 22 months of the 3-year planning period, CGIAR has achieved significant progress across key workstreams. This included launching Research Initiatives and Impact Area platforms and completing their inaugural annual reporting cycle, expanding W1 pooled funding, and laying the groundwork for additional resource mobilization. Additionally, he noted that a system-wide assessment of integrated services and systems was conducted.
26. The presentation emphasized, however, that substantial effort remains to deliver on all 31 objectives of the Plan, by 2024. The outcomes of the UGR will be integral to informing timelines and priorities moving forward. Maintaining momentum to effectively achieve milestones was noted as imperative.
27. The presentation referenced detailed KPIs and targets across the Plan's objectives and requested the Council's guidance on refinements to these metrics for future reporting and performance tracking. This feedback will enable management to focus on the most impactful priorities.

*Key Discussion Areas*

28. Council participants expressed appreciation for the Integration Plan progress report and highlighted the importance of analyzing and prioritizing key performance indicators – in collaboration with regional and country partners – to focus on areas where CGIAR has a true comparative advantage and can have the most impact. Key reflection themes included:

**Integration and Reform**

- a. Recognition of the central role of integration in the ‘One CGIAR’ reform, while acknowledging slower progress due to various reasons;
- b. Request for management to identify their top three priorities from the 31 objectives of the Plan;
- c. Affirmation of the opportunities for further rooting CGIAR in its Centers to leverage existing capacities and improve efficiencies;
- d. Call for harmonizing standards for audit, risk management, ethics, and evaluation across Centers, with a focus on timely progress; and
- e. Recognition of the complexity of recruiting senior management staff from CGIAR Centers to work in the more complex system-wide environment, and emphasis on the need to monitor the performance of ‘One CGIAR’ senior staff against defined reform targets.

**Research Priorities and Outcomes**

- f. Strong support for a unified, multidisciplinary, and inclusive research agenda;
- g. Recommendation to prioritize and streamline the extensive number of objectives in the Integration Plan KPIs;
- h. Recommendation to further strengthen assessment of how CGIAR’s shared research portfolio contributes to the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (‘SDGs’)— particularly by measuring contributions to global agenda setting, [CGIAR’s Impact Areas](#), and development-focused outcomes;
- i. Call for deeper analysis of key priorities within KPIs and clarification on confidence thresholds, especially concerning science quality assurance;

**Partnerships and Collaboration**

- j. Recognition of the Integration Plan’s role in enhancing collaboration and efficiency within CGIAR;
- k. Strong affirmation to strengthen CGIAR’s collaboration with NARES, including ongoing efforts to address the diverse needs of micro-environments across the global south; and
- l. Recommendation to align KPIs with national and regional priorities, enhancing partner engagement in portfolio delivery.

29. In response, the interim EMD highlighted three main points: First, a strong financial structure can create significant opportunities for CGIAR. Second, CGIAR should stay focused on research, maintaining a clear link between interventions and reducing hunger and poverty through partnerships. Third, CGIAR should prioritize key performance indicators (KPIs) and concentrate efforts where it can have the greatest impact. The interim EMD commended the dedication of CGIAR staff in the ‘One CGIAR’ integration, recognizing the challenges of working across standards, geographies, and disciplines without overcomplicating things.

**Spotlight Session — CGIAR’s Scientists**

30. In keeping with the Council’s recent tradition of showcasing CGIAR’s scientists and scientific endeavors through video spotlights throughout Council meetings, the Co-

Chair invited the interim EMD to introduce the first of four such enlightening sessions.

31. The first spotlight session highlighted Dr. Fatimata Bachabi, a seed health pathologist based at AfricaRice in Cote d'Ivoire, who is working to mitigate phytosanitary threats in the face of climate change.

#### Agenda Item 5: 2025-2027 Portfolio Design Process

32. At the invitation of the second Co-Chair, the Council received an update from the three Science Group Managing Directors and the Interim Managing Director, Regions and Partnership, on the early stages of the portfolio design process. The focus was aligning CGIAR's portfolio for measurable impact on the SDGs, with this discussion offering an opportunity for in-person Council input and additional written comments.
33. The Managing Director, Genetic Innovation, outlined the current portfolio structure of Science Groups, Regional Integrated Initiatives ('RII'), and Impact Area platforms. Acknowledging the Council's desire for increased participation in the portfolio design process, she discussed preliminary considerations for the upcoming portfolio design and sought Council feedback on the early-stage process, highlighting this as an important informal input opportunity.
34. The Managing Director outlined the Science Groups' vision for a more ambitious and integrated 2025-2027 portfolio. This approach involves fewer but more impactful Initiatives to elevate strategic focus and integration. The overarching goal is to elevate strategic focus and integration across these dimensions. Emphasizing the inevitability of challenging decisions, she highlighted the delicate balance required, navigating tradeoffs between ambitious objectives, operational agility, and the inclusiveness of specific regional or topical priorities. Highlighting the importance of Council input, she underscored achieving the right equilibrium within these nuanced tradeoffs as CGIAR pursues a more impactful portfolio aligned with the SDGs.
35. The overarching proposed changes for the 2025-2027 portfolio included the following objectives:
  - a. Elevating strategic focus to the Science Group level for integrated management, integrated delivery, and partnerships for delivery against SDGs;
  - b. Consolidating the portfolio with a maximum of five Initiatives per Science Group;
  - c. Clarifying the role and functions of RII and Impact Area platforms to better articulate these key cross-cutting functions, as well as how the RIIs and Impact Area platforms are structured and operate;
  - d. Establishing new finance models, especially for assets such as genebanks that are being explored through the Financial Model Reference Group ('FMRG');
  - e. Establishing entry points for new research work with structured opportunities to bring in new ideas;
  - f. Incorporating ICRISAT, which will be important for delivery of work; and
  - g. Strengthening support functions, including regions and partnership, communications, digital and data, monitoring, evaluation, learning and impact assessment ('MELIA'), and management coordination.

36. The Managing Director, Genetic Innovation, provided an overview of the current genetic innovation portfolio. This highlighted its consolidation into a unified program over the past three years, aiming to expedite genetic gain for climate change resilience, introduce new crop varieties, integrate gender-intentional and locally responsive market insights, and establish global breeding networks with partners. For the upcoming portfolio, plans include five unified Initiatives tailored to regional needs and market segments, with a specific emphasis on resource allocation for breeding and specialized asset funding mechanisms for genebanks.
37. The Resilient Agri-Food Systems ('RAFS') current portfolio was discussed, highlighting progress in impact orientation, partnerships, and systems thinking over the past three years. Two options for restructuring the next portfolio were presented for consideration. One option had 4 Initiatives on crop intensification, sustainable livestock, urban systems, and aquatic foods. The other option incorporated aquatic foods within an Initiative on sustainable animal sourced foods, along with Initiatives on sustainable crops and resilient cities. Options for restructuring for the next portfolio were presented for consideration, while noting that an analysis of growth trends would inform prioritization.
38. The Managing Director, Systems Transformation, noted that the current portfolio has 12 Initiatives mapped across CGIAR's five Impact Areas. He proposed consolidating these in the next portfolio to improve resource allocation, goal alignment, evaluation, and responsiveness. The proposed framework aims to ensure the Systems Transformation Initiatives remain dynamic and responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.
39. Three options were explored for integrating RII and Impact Area platforms:
  - a. **Status Quo:** Maintain the existing structure of around seven RII while clarifying the relationship between regional and thematic Initiatives;
  - b. **Aggregated Model:** Integrate RII into a single Initiative focusing on strategic research for scaling and integrating innovations across Science Groups; and
  - c. **Upgrade Regional Presence:** Showcase regional work by integrating it into thematic Initiatives without eliminating regional Initiatives.
40. In addition to the three options for integrating RII and Impact Area platforms, there was also a discussion of the need for new funding models to support assets such as genebanks, datasets, modeling, and infrastructure, and the need to understand how funding modalities impact regional versus thematic Initiatives, taking into account competition for funding and potential inclusion of new RII potentially under a Window 2 funding.
41. The interim Managing Director, Resilient Agri-Food Systems, stressed the need for consultations and partnerships to drive SDG-focused impact, focusing on farmer-facing Initiatives and building partnerships with the private sector. He emphasized leveraging CGIAR's scientific capabilities, particularly in genetics and data, to meet SDGs and build capacity, including by engaging early-career scientists and post-docs. He expressed

enthusiasm for developing a more cohesive and coherent portfolio for 2025-2027, aligning it with regional priorities and partnerships, and ensuring the involvement of the five impact area platforms.

42. Next steps were outlined, including seeking the Council's feedback, with further discussions in December and the presentation of new Initiatives planned for mid-2024, followed by regional consultations and the design of specific portfolio elements.

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

43. Council participants expressed appreciation to the Science Group Managing Directors for their informative presentation and transparency in the new portfolio design process. Key reflection themes included:
  - a. Acknowledgement of the progress made on integration and portfolio design by System leadership, incorporating insights and input from the ISDC;
  - b. Affirmation of the principles outlined for the portfolio design process, including transparency, consultation, and alignment with national priorities;
  - c. Support for the proposed consolidation of Initiatives to five per Science Group to enable greater focus and efficiency;
  - d. Recognition of the need to further prioritize and focus the portfolio based on CGIAR comparative advantage and alignment with strategy;
  - e. Concerns about losing visibility on certain impact areas and regional priorities with fewer, more consolidated Initiatives;
  - f. Questions about how Regional Integrated Initiatives will align with the portfolio structure and ensure impact;
  - g. Expressions of support for meaningful consultation and partnership with national partners throughout the design process were met with inquiries about opportunities for genuine dialogue and collaboration to develop a transformative research agenda through joint efforts with NARES and local partners;
  - h. Request for a systematic plan to ensure gender integration throughout the portfolio design process, reiterating the importance of CGIAR delivering on its gender equality commitments;
  - i. Varying perspectives on how to best integrate agroforestry, livestock, and aquatic foods, while affirming that they are all important for achieving food security under climate change;
  - j. Suggestions to explore new funding modalities for core assets like genebanks, separate from Initiatives;
  - k. A call to leverage CGIAR's climate expertise more fully in global agenda setting;
  - l. Emphasis on the importance of CapSha in developing CGIAR's capacity strengthening work, with questions on where CapSha fits into the portfolio design plan;
  - m. Emphasis on the need for clear metrics and KPIs linked to CGIAR 2030 strategy and SDG targets, including a reminder of the urgency to show impact on core SDGs like poverty and hunger reduction;
  - n. A proposal to identify geographic hotspots for priority focus based on agriculture's role in reducing poverty;

- o. A reminder that timelines need to provide sufficient time for quality design and consultation;
  - p. Highlighting the importance when redesigning the portfolio of paying attention to the impact on ongoing research activities at individual Centers and their researchers; and
  - q. Encouragement to maximize stability through use of Window 1 funding wherever feasible.
44. The Managing Directors thanked the Council for the valuable input and affirmed their commitment to addressing the key points raised, including:
- a. Recognition of the need to strengthen partnerships and maximize capacity building opportunities;
  - b. Acknowledgement of the importance of integrating livestock, fisheries, and crop systems and focusing on smallholder systems using a systems approach;
  - c. Affirmation of the inclusion of gender research and commitment to interweaving it throughout the development process and quality assurance;
  - d. Affirmation of making progress in agroforestry in continued partnership with CIFOR and ICRAF;
  - e. Recognition of the need for longer-term research, planning, and realistic targets and metrics;
  - f. Recognition of the need for further consultation on key regional and thematic concerns; and
  - g. Acknowledgment of the importance of addressing issues with the portfolio companion document, particularly around providing more details on priorities, targets, timelines, and budget allocations.

#### *Session Outcomes*

45. Appreciation was extended to the Science Group Managing Directors for their significant efforts and effective collaboration in shaping the portfolio design plan. Their excellent teamwork and strong leadership within their respective areas were recognized, with the increasing cohesion among the leadership team becoming increasingly apparent as the 'One CGIAR' transition progresses.
46. **SC19-AP1 – Development of the 2025-2027 research portfolio**  
System Council members were invited to submit written comments on the proposals for developing the 2025-2027 CGIAR research portfolio.
47. **SC19-AP2 – Refinement of Key Performance Indicators**  
CGIAR management is encouraged to prioritize and focus the proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and work with national and regional partners to ensure they are embedded in development outcomes and link to the five CGIAR Impact Areas and global agenda setting.

## Agenda Item 6: CGIAR Financial Plan – Learning from 2023 and Planning for 2024

48. CGIAR's Global Director, Business Operations and Finance outlined the organization's efforts to improve budgeting and operational efficiency by applying 2023 lessons learned to the 2024 budgeting process.
49. She highlighted the Business Operations and Finance unit's substantial staff development investment, having trained 154 members over nine months and held four workshops with 90 participants to enhance operational efficiency. She noted ongoing efforts through four major projects to promote an integrated, efficient, and effective approach to operations, including accounting and budgeting.
50. She emphasized the importance of stability and the plan to work with a conservative budget while pursuing higher funding levels during the year. To tackle the issue of funding designation delays experienced in 2023, the Global Director emphasized the importance of streamlining the budgeting process and highlighted the achievement of securing 18 out of 20 designations for 2024. This early designation enhances planning certainty for 2024, aligning with the key goal of providing stability to scientists and the organization.

### *Key Discussion Areas*

51. During discussion, members provided the following reflections:
  - a. Recognition of the budget model improvements and timeline for a more consolidated, prioritized financial plan;
  - b. Appreciation of risk mitigation efforts and awareness that funding instability could disincentivize W1 pooled funding, with a call for designation transparency from funders;
  - c. Recommendation for stability reserves to cover unforeseen events and proposing the consideration of a 'One CGIAR' stability fund to mitigate major shifts in funding;
  - d. Acknowledgment of the importance of early annual designations to help effectively manage the portfolio;
  - e. Noting that the European Union has agreed to contribute to the CGIAR Trust Fund for 2024 and beyond;
  - f. Emphasis on the need for improvements and urgent priorities in the financial and budget model, considering it one of the most significant opportunity areas;
  - g. Recognition of work package-level prioritization within Initiatives, including scaling down or dropping underperforming Initiatives and accelerating successful ones — and acknowledging the challenge of making this prioritization visible to stakeholders;
  - h. Inquiry about how Managing Directors manage funding volatility and whether they use performance priorities to adapt over time;
  - i. Request for a review of original Initiative aspirations benchmarked against current funding to assess significant disparities; and
  - j. Clarification that the RASCI (Responsible, Accountable, Supporting, Consulted

and Informed) tool's purpose is to clarify integrated system roles for timely, accurate, consulted budgeting.

52. In response, the Global Director emphasized the collaborative efforts across the Centers, which involved active participation from all finance directors, including ICRISAT as a new participant, fostering engagement and collaboration. This engagement would persist at specific functional levels, encompassing procurement, facilities, and finance. She highlighted the organization's valuable two-year Initiative track record, providing insights into predicting future needs and funding requirements. Furthermore, she stressed the organization's objective of incorporating a level of unrestricted funding to bridge gaps and maintain stability in the face of unpredictability. Finally, she mentioned that the FMRG planned to propose ideas for addressing funding stability and present these proposals to the Council.

### Spotlight Session — CGIAR's Scientists

53. The second Co-Chair introduced the second spotlight session video focused on the need for well-suited facilities to enable impactful research and scaling of Initiatives. It showcased livestock, aquaculture, and crop research facilities in Africa and Asia. Speakers highlighted the importance of sustaining, enhancing, and sharing key assets and facilities across Centers, including through technologies like solar power. They stressed the need to invest in critical infrastructure upgrades to unlock potential and advance CGIAR's mission.

### Agenda Item 7: Funding Modalities

54. The Global Director of Business Operations and Finance, in her role as co-chair of the Finance Model Reference Group ('FMRG'), provided a brief update on the Group's work since July. She recalled the FMRG had been established with Council support in May (SC18) to explore funding improvements for 2025-2027. The FMRG includes Council, System Board, Center Board, and management representatives and has met twice since being established.
55. The FMRG co-chair, the Global Director, Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization, noted that the FMRG aims to first define principles to simplify, optimize, predict, and increase flexibility in funding, addressing overall scope. During SC19, they hope to introduce initial concepts and gather early feedback from the Council.
56. The two Council FMRG representatives, Manfred Kaufmann and Ruben Echeverria, clarified that, at this stage, the FMRG has focused on establishing terms of reference ('TOR') and identifying challenges. They stressed the importance of a systematic approach to funding challenges rather than a patchwork one. Preliminary model architecture ideas were presented, including four potential weighted funding windows for the System, Science Groups, Initiatives/platforms, and Centers. Levies for legacy infrastructure and genebanks were also suggested. The representatives sought Council feedback to guide upcoming FMRG sessions, with the aim of presenting a refined proposal at the next meeting. The goal is to agree on modalities before finalizing the

2025-2027 portfolio.

*Key Discussion Areas*

57. Members expressed appreciation for the topic's inclusion on the agenda and supported accelerating the work to ensure new modalities would be ready for the next funding cycle. Additional reflections included:
  - a. Questions on model incentives and impacts, including whether levy percentages would be flat or varied, and effects on W1 pooled funding;
  - b. Interest in where "blue sky" research would fit, being mindful of new and emerging funding needs;
  - c. Suggestion to consider potential impact on Council composition due to weighted windows proposal, especially for small donors unable to participate in designated funding;
  - d. Questioning whether the proposed 4x System vs Center funding weighting is suitable, noting the importance of varied funding windows for Centers' unique roles;
  - e. Requests for transparency on overhead costs and bilateral program impacts;
  - f. Questions on how the model would work for current W1 donors regarding genebank and infrastructure levies;
  - g. Recommendation to consider a small funding window mechanism for non-core projects aligned with Center Host Country mandates;
  - h. Call for clearly defining the permitted uses for the various recommended funding types, particularly in distinguishing what constitutes "System" restricted Initiative funding versus flexible core organizational support (noting that current W1 funding is mostly Initiative-restricted and may not be used to fund legacy infrastructure at the Centers);
  - i. Interest expressed in clarifying infrastructure levy fund governance processes; and
  - j. Need to clarify modalities quickly to inform resource mobilization.
58. The presenters expressed appreciation for the feedback, indicating it would help refine the prospective models. They mentioned the next steps would include assessing feasibility and providing an updated proposal to the Council. It was noted that the initially suggested weights and percentages were not yet finalized, advising to first agree on structure, then focus on weighting. They also recalled that a genebank levy had been previously approval by the Council, but never implemented, and that those implementation details could be revisited as part of the FMRG's work. They welcomed ongoing feedback as preliminary concepts are refined.

*Session Outcome*

59. The Co-Chair stressed that funding is vital for CGIAR, affecting its mission, research, talent, partnerships, and impact. He reiterated the need for stable, flexible funding to encourage cooperation, reduce inefficiencies, and effectively tackle challenges.

## Agenda Item 8: Funding CGIAR's Genebanks

60. The Co-Chair introduced the genebank funding discussion, linking to the prior item on funding modalities. He recalled the prior day's message from Morocco's Minister of Agriculture on the challenge of doing more with less, emphasizing efficiency and impact as CGIAR aims to optimize limited resources.
61. The interim EMD reported a decrease in expected Crop Trust funding for CGIAR genebanks, prompting the use of W1 funds to fill the gap. Initially affecting the Genetic Innovation Science Group, future allocations will be deducted uniformly from the top, impacting all three Science Groups. Discussions on funding modalities are underway to secure a sustainable genebank funding solution in the long term. The interim EMD expressed gratitude to donors who supported the onboarding of ICRISAT and its genebank, pointing out the broader issue of the amount that comes out of the Crop Trust endowment to CGIAR genebanks under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Plant Treaty).

### *Key Discussion Areas*

62. The Crop Trust Executive Director clarified the Crop Trust's commitment to CGIAR genebanks and noted the progress in fulfilling this commitment and challenges arising from a discontinuation of EU funding. Emphasizing the importance of bolstering contributions to the Crop Trust endowment fund, the Director highlighted that the U.S. remains the sole continuous contributor, underscoring ongoing efforts to secure sustained, long-term funding for genebanks.
63. Participants emphasized the importance of establishing a stable and secure funding mechanism for CGIAR genebanks, in close collaboration with the Crop Trust. Key reflections included:
  - a. Appreciation for the incremental increases in Crop Trust funding directed towards this CGIAR asset, along with the acknowledgment that the Crop Trust endowment represents the enduring funding vision for genebanks;
  - b. Recognition of the fact that, due to budget constraints and the integration of ICRISAT, the operational costs have escalated to a range of roughly estimated US\$22-28 million, necessitating support from the Crop Trust, other potential donors, and the consideration of a CGIAR levy;
  - c. Strong support for diversifying funding sources, including the exploration of a levy, in response to the substantial utilization of W1 funds; and
  - d. Expressions of interest in conducting a comprehensive review of the historical funding trends from the Crop Trust as a percentage of the total funding.

## Agenda Item 9: Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization

64. The second Co-Chair introduced the session on Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization, underlining its importance in the context of earlier funding discussions.

65. The Global Director, Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization, thanked Council members for their strong support and progress in securing multi-year funding commitments and W1 pooled funding aligned to ‘One CGIAR’ integration. He presented an overview of the 2023-2024 Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization Strategy: “Capturing the Benefits of Greater Collaboration”, as outlined in the background working document, highlighting the collaborative nature of the strategy and input from all Centers.
66. He described the strategy’s guidance on resource mobilization, available funding for CGIAR research and innovation, and a path to diversify by 2030. He spotlighted that the strategy aims for a US\$2 billion target — a fraction of the globally available funding and of what CGIAR will need to adequately advance [CGIAR’s Research and Innovation Strategy](#).
67. The presentation focused on three core aspects: i) strong 2023 funding rebound since COVID; ii) setting a business cycle target, aiming for 8.5-10% annual growth to reach \$2 billion by 2030; and iii) the opportunity at COP28 to position CGIAR in the global climate dialogue and launch the ‘With Science We Can’ campaign.
68. The System Council was urged to prioritize pooled funding, protect/increase funding, assist in opening doors to climate and regional funds, and align CGIAR funding announcements and statements of support with COP28 where possible.

*Key Discussion Areas*

69. Council members held diverse perspectives on the US\$2 billion target, ranging from resounding endorsement to concerns about practicality, with suggestions for a phased approach.
70. It was underscored that the Council should not be the primary target audience, and the strategy should concentrate on engaging potential new funders. Members expressed their willingness to leverage their support as ambassadors for the strategy.
71. The Council collectively recognized CGIAR’s vast potential and acknowledged the global underinvestment in agricultural research and innovation. There was unanimous support for broadening and diversifying the pool of funders, including involving more countries, emerging markets, new donors, and OECD Development Assistance Committee funders.
72. Council members expressed strong support for CGIAR’s role in climate change adaptation and mitigation. They held optimism about attracting new funding at COP28 and put forward several recommendations. These included investing in climate science to address tipping point challenges in climate change and agricultural sector vulnerability, expanding research on mitigation and adaptation, incorporating tree-related research, and conducting fundamental research on climate sensitivity in crops, particularly non-major crops. Clarity was also sought on CGIAR’s position regarding the effectiveness of adaptation, including breeding, in addressing climate damage.

73. The Global Director, Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization, commended the Council as dedicated champions of CGIAR who are deeply invested in the organization. He urged participants to help unlock new funding channels within their respective organizations, enhancing CGIAR's visibility to a broader range of potential funders. He emphasized that the strategy presents an ambitious path to reach the US\$2 billion target by 2030, supported by comprehensive data analysis and rooted in actionable financing. He stressed that accessing diverse funding sources necessitates marketing and campaigns, with upcoming events such as COP28 providing opportunities to introduce CGIAR to new funders.

#### Agenda Item 12: Gender in CGIAR's Research

74. At the Co-Chair's invitation, the Director, GENDER Impact Platform, provided an overview of the state of gender research within CGIAR.
75. The GENDER Platform Director began by highlighting the recent CGIAR gender research conference held in Delhi in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research ('ICAR'). With 600 participants, the conference aimed to advance gender equality in food systems. Key takeaways emphasized addressing the gender productivity gap through innovative initiatives, especially in East Africa. Climate change's impact on the gender gap and its macroeconomic benefits were significant themes. The importance of challenging societal norms and measuring gender-transformative efforts was also highlighted.
76. The GENDER Platform Director emphasized the need for sustained commitments to reinforce gender research in the next portfolio. She called for ring-fenced budgets for gender researchers and implementing a comprehensive data system to quantify investments, noting that these measures are considered crucial for propelling gender-focused agricultural transformation.
77. In closing, the GENDER Platform Director reiterated the importance of collaborative, swift action to empower women in agriculture and food systems. She expressed appreciation for the Council's support.

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

78. Council participants expressed appreciation for the presentation and acknowledged the importance of the ongoing GENDER Impact Platform and gender research investments. Additional reflections included:
- Appreciation for the significance of the CGIAR gender research conference;
  - Recognition of the growing importance of gender research in CGIAR;
  - Appreciation of GENDER Platform actions based on evaluation recommendations;
  - Interest in understanding how youth and social inclusion position papers will influence the next portfolio;
  - Recognition that integrating gender in portfolio design needs underscoring,

- including supporting gender transformative approaches and more on the climate-gender nexus;
- f. Query on the quality assurance entry point for integrating gender research into the next portfolio;
  - g. Acknowledgement of the need to move from diagnostics to solutions and produce more gender research;
  - h. Querying availability of gender disaggregated data and evidence;
  - i. Strong affirmation that gender research presents funding opportunities;
  - j. Inquiry about the evidence base for gender-smart approaches to increase impact and the increase the pace of poverty reduction, child stunting reduction and the pace of women's empowerment; and
  - k. Suggestions to research redefining poverty lines to be nutrition-based and focus on women and children, and a "debt for hunger swap" strategy emphasizing permanent gains.
79. In response, the GENDER Platform Director:
- a. Cited budget constraints as a significant hurdle in collecting gender-disaggregated data, which doubles costs by engaging multiple household members. But progress is being made integrating this practice into projects;
  - b. Encouraged moving away from isolated efforts and highlighted the importance of defining specific research questions for each action area, allowing Initiatives to contribute to gender research more structurally;
  - c. Mentioned that solution discussions are essential but complex, emphasizing the need for long-term research and trade-offs; and
  - d. Commented on the potential for deepening beneficial collaborations between GENDER Platform and Climate Adaptation and Mitigation and Nutrition, Health, and Food Security Platforms.

### Agenda Item 13: Gender, Diversity, and Inclusion in CGIAR's Workplaces

80. Transitioning to the topic of gender, diversity, and inclusion (GDI) in CGIAR workplaces, the second Co-Chair acknowledged comments from the prior session praising CGIAR's ambitious GDI efforts and the recommendation to increase disability inclusion within the organization.
81. The Global Director, People and Culture, introduced the new GDI and Culture Director to present CGIAR's second two-year GDI Action Plan, which was developed through extensive co-creation. The Action Plan focuses on inclusive leadership, culture, representation, and accountability to cultivate respect and equal opportunity.
82. The Global Director, People and Culture, noted that 'One CGIAR' appointments reflect diversity, with 52% women and 48% from the Global South and that workforce data shows 44.4% women, with 35% female scientists. She referred Council participants to the comprehensive workforce data available on the [CGIAR external dashboard](#), offering insights through a GDI lens.

83. Despite progress being made, she stressed that challenges persist. To address the “leaky pipeline” limiting women’s career progression, the Global Director, People and Culture, announced that the team is working on a real-time database to collect recruitment, progression, and departure data for proactive analysis.

*Key Discussion Areas*

84. In discussion, Council participants expressed their support for the ambitious GDI Action Plan and inquired about ways to further reinforce GDI advancement. Additional reflections included:
- a. Calls for ensuring that diversity effectively translates into inclusion within the organization;
  - b. Stressed the necessity of clear budgets, mandates, and reporting structures for effective GDI Action Plan implementation, while also recognizing the importance of addressing intersectionality and fostering genuine diversity and inclusion;
  - c. Commitment to influencing the wider system to promote improvements and progress in GDI;
  - d. Appreciation for the integration of best practices and norms across CGIAR Centers to enhance GDI endeavors;
  - e. Praise for the real-time people database Initiative aimed at analyzing and addressing the “leaky pipeline”;
  - f. Acknowledgment of the ongoing challenge in defining language within CGIAR, particularly regarding self-definition in diversity and inclusion dimensions, with a noted opportunity for improvement in terminology and measurement practices;
  - g. Recognition that CGIAR’s core business activities must reinforce GDI and that a commitment is needed to influence the broader system to drive improvements in GDI;
  - h. Recognition of the role of performance management and clear targets in facilitating the transition toward a more inclusive workplace;
  - i. Support for employing nuanced language, such as “on track,” to assess the progress of Action Plan indicators; and
  - j. Affirmation of CGIAR’s dedication to establishing a shared vision of inclusivity, transparency, and accountability.

*Session Outcome*

85. The second Co-Chair commended the presentation and highlighted how the discussions reflected the ongoing efforts and challenges in strategically implementing GDI across CGIAR. Recognition of the GDI Action Plan’s ambitious potential for enhancing diversity and inclusion and CGIAR’s commitment to advancing GDI. The discussions demonstrated the Council’s strong support for CGIAR’s concrete GDI plans and goals, emphasizing the importance of data, analysis, and accountability.

## *Day 2 Opening*

### *Welcome and opening*

86. On the second day, Council Chair Juergen Voegele opened proceedings, offering apologies for his delayed arrival due to travelling from the fourth meeting of the UN Transitional Committee on Loss and Damage in Aswan, Egypt. He expressed his gratitude to his Co-Chairs for ably steering the work of the Council in his absence. In addressing the Council, he highlighted pressing global challenges including climate change, biodiversity loss, and antimicrobial resistance. He emphasized the critical need for CGIAR to accelerate impactful research and articulate its value convincingly to garner increased funding support from donors.
87. The Chair urged accelerating reforms without losing momentum, highlighting pressing global challenges such as climate change that require CGIAR to advance impactful research and clearly convey its value. He commended local partnerships as models for CGIAR-national collaboration. On emerging technologies like artificial intelligence ('AI'), he noted the need to explore benefits like accelerating breeding, while managing risks. The Chair invited the interim EMD to summarize key highlights from the previous day.

### *Recap of pre-events and Day 1*

88. The interim EMD acknowledged the gracious hospitality of ICARDA and the Government of Morocco throughout the week, including insightful visits to ICARDA and the National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA). He recognized Agriculture Minister Dr. Mohamed Sadiki and INRA Director General Dr. Faouzi Bekkaoui as committed CGIAR champions.
89. The interim EMD reflected on important side events, with a consistent thread running through about gender, and on the substantive discussions from the previous day. These discussions encompassed noteworthy achievements against KPIs outlined by the Board Chair; significant progress in integration across governance and other domains, while also acknowledging the remaining work to be done. The revisit of the "grand bargain" was highlighted, emphasizing the call for increased W1 (pooled) and portfolio funding; the need for a new funding model for system-wide infrastructure and core assets. There was recognition of the necessity for a fresh funding model for system-wide infrastructure and core assets.
90. Moreover, Science Group Managing Directors proposed elevating and consolidating the research portfolio, recognizing the need for a more cohesive approach. The imperative to integrate gender, diversity, and inclusion priorities throughout CGIAR's research, workplace culture, and leadership was emphasized. Overall, the day demonstrated significant strides in advancing an integrated research partnership. Discussions recognized the ambitious target of surpassing US\$2 billion in funding, underscoring the critical importance of involving new donors and tapping into diverse funding sources, including climate finance. This underscores the imperative for a

compelling value proposition and ensuring sufficient resources to effectively realize these ambitious objectives.

91. Additionally, it was recalled that CGIAR signed a hosting agreement with GFAR (Global Forum on Agricultural Research), facilitated with the cooperation of FAO (UN Food and Agriculture Organization) and IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development).

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

92. During the discussion, Council participants' reflections included:
  - a. Affirmation of the importance of IFAD's re-engagement with CGIAR and aligning the global engagement agenda with the SDGs to guide CGIAR's direction;
  - b. Acknowledgement of the need to prioritize partnerships and collaboration with stakeholders, emphasizing the balance between pioneering research and scaling up research through collaboration with NARES to address global challenges;
  - c. A call to reevaluate the incentive structure in financing modalities, with optimism about reaching the US\$2 billion funding goal through aligned incentives and increased donor participation;
  - d. An urgent call for proactive investments in prevention and preparedness research, advocating for preparedness rather than waiting for crises to trigger funding increases — citing the imminent food crisis in Sudan due to rising prices and trade disruptions, emphasizing the need for proactive intervention to mitigate severe shortages and CGIAR's potential role; and
  - e. Support for CGIAR's continual addressing of food loss and waste through location-specific research to identify loss drivers across commodities and value chain stages, in order to develop prevention innovations that partners can scale up.
93. The Chair also emphasized the critical importance of funding and managing CGIAR's assets, including buildings, labs, datasets and more. He suggested creating a working group or taskforce to examine CGIAR asset funding and management going forward. This was considered necessary to address rising costs and ensure long-term sustainability.

#### *Session Outcomes*

94. **SC19-AP3 – Funding of CGIAR assets**

The System Council requested that a small working group be formed to analyze how CGIAR soft and hard assets are funded, structured, and managed so that they can be protected and funded in the future.

#### *Agenda Item 11: System Council Composition*

95. The Chair initiated the discussion on Council composition, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity in involving diverse perspectives while adhering to established rules and procedures. He advocated flexibility at times but stressed that agreed-upon rules are foundational for accountability, fairness, transparency and consistency in governance.

The Chair stated that inclusivity should not compromise the rules that lend legitimacy and trust. The Council must balance representation and rigor in determining membership.

96. The Chair invited Council member Christophe Larose to provide an update on behalf of the Council's funder members. Mr. Larose reported that the funder seat reconciliation process applied investment data from 2019-2021, utilizing the weighted average for the current composition. This process identified 17 eligible funders for 15 funder voting seats. Welcoming new members India, France, Crop Trust, and IFAD based on the reconciliation criteria, he expressed eagerness to working together in the future to guide implement and invest in CGIAR's research innovation strategy.
97. It was noted that, considering that relationships and historical considerations are important, the newly composed Council will continue to work closely and inclusively with those who are no longer eligible for a funder seat. Furthermore, it was noted that the current composition criteria would undergo a review for enhanced clarity, duly recognizing past investments and encouraging commitments for future endeavors.

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

98. The discussion focused on balancing financial incentives with diverse perspectives in the context of System Council composition. Council participants made the following reflections:
  - a. Welcoming new funder members India, France, Crop Trust, and IFAD, reinforcing collaboration in guiding CGIAR's Research and Innovation Strategy;
  - b. Calls for a balance between updated contributions and future incentives to prevent discouraging new/returning donors, emphasizing inclusivity, transparency, and clear rules;
  - c. Suggestions to consider the UGR, funding modalities, and incentive structures in establishing next reconciliation rules;
  - d. Emphasis on the need to establish clear criteria for the next Council composition reconciliation and determine the funding period that will guide the reconciliation process — attention drawn to the funding period used for the current reconciliation process which does not take into account the increased 2022-2024 research portfolio funding and could disincentivize some funders;
  - e. The need to reflect on an effective engagement model and how that can be fed back to the governance structure, allowing for views to be heard in the right format and through the right pathway;
  - f. Recommendations to allow flexibility to accommodate new donors, contributors, and partners, with a particular emphasis on keeping lapsed funders "in the fold," especially those who have faced recent political issues but have a history of being strong supporter — this includes incentivizing W1 (pooled) funding for enhanced collaboration;
  - g. Information on accepting forward pledges as a pathway to Council membership — currently, there are five "Additional Temporary Voting Member" seats on the Council for funders who make forward pledges;
  - h. Need to reconcile the two ongoing discussions: a) future funding of CGIAR and

- reaching the US\$2 billion funding threshold and b) Council membership — this is important in light of the possible success of the COP28 resource mobilization campaign and the need to accommodate non-traditional funders in the CGIAR governance structure;
- i. Suggestion to slowly increase the ceiling or threshold of constituency seats, moving away from individual funders meeting the threshold but having the aggregate constituency seat meet the threshold instead<sup>3</sup>; and
  - j. Acknowledgement that Developing Countries Constituencies also held discussions and agreed in broad terms on the need to increase participation of other stakeholders in their constituencies, without expanding the Council membership — recognizing that that engagement need not solely occur through a seat but can involve alternative avenues like active involvement in co-creating the research agenda.

#### *Session Outcomes*

99. The Chair summarized the discussion, emphasizing the need for well-calibrated criteria that balance incentivizing contributions and maintaining an inclusive, consultative forum. He affirmed the need to balance inclusive representation with an efficient Council size, underscoring expanding membership drastically is not the intention, and more consultation is required before determining next steps.

#### Agenda Item 14: Ethics and Business Conduct

100. At the invitation of the Chair, CGIAR's interim Director of the Office of Ethics and Business Conduct ('EBC') presented highlights from the second annual EBC report, highlighting EBC's evolving role within CGIAR. She provided an overview of EBC's accomplishments in offering confidential advice, conducting investigations, providing training, and expanding the CGIAR risk map to include environmental, social, and governance ('ESG') matters, and continued work of the ombuds program. She also mentioned the adoption of four core ethics policies by the Council in January 2023. However, she expressed concerns about some Centers non-adoption of these policies and about EBC's investigative authority, which has impeded effective policy implementation, whistleblower protection, and system-wide risk mitigation.
101. The Director noted EBC's broad mandate encompassing ESG matters, ombuds services, and research ethics, which has diluted focus and strained resources. She suggested considering relocation of ESG and ombuds functions to maintain the Unit's independence, in alignment with peer organizations. She stressed the importance of a system-wide conflict of interest and financial disclosure program to detect and manage conflicts of interest and financial risks.
102. The Director reaffirmed EBC's commitment to collaboration and establishing internal and research ethics standards. However, she emphasized first clarifying EBC's mandate

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<sup>3</sup> Germany and Belgium collectively hold a single voting seat on the CGIAR System Council, making them the only two countries to share a seat.

and investigative authority through an EBC charter before shifting focus to shaping organizational culture through training and outreach.

103. The Global General Counsel stressed the systemic risk arising from challenges in system-wide policy compliance. He advocated for the Council to reaffirm the [Charter of the CGIAR System Organization](#) ('Charter'),<sup>4</sup> highlighting that Centers failing to implement approved CGIAR Policies introduce legal uncertainties.

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

104. Council participants expressed appreciation for addressing sensitive issues and stressed the importance of establishing a system-wide ethics framework. They voiced significant concerns regarding the reputational, legal, and financial risks of Centers not complying with approved CGIAR policies, underscoring the need for unified policy adoption to maintain funding.
105. Additional reflections included:
  - a. Acknowledgment of EBC's role in safeguarding CGIAR's staff and reputation;
  - b. Affirmation that ethics policies and conduct accountability are essential;
  - c. Concerns raised about non-compliance issues and the need to understand the reasons for non-compliance as well as the interaction between EBC, Centers' internal and external auditors, and Boards;
  - d. A call for concrete actions to ensure the EBC function is properly resourced and equipped with mechanisms that can provide assurance to funders of adequate ethics oversight applied system-wide;
  - e. Request for the System Council Assurance and Oversight Committee (AOC) to look into the issue — and at how reputational and financial risks can be managed across the system;
  - f. Pointing out the disconnect, taking into consideration that the majority of the Center Board members are members of the System Board and the fact that some Center Boards have not adopted the EBC policies;
  - g. Strong emphasis on the importance of effective system-wide mechanisms for whistleblowing, transparency around ethics and reporting financial irregularities, policy compliance across Centers (particularly regarding pooled funding), clear mandates and reporting lines, a culture of openness, and research ethics and whistleblower protections to maintain trust and transparency; and
  - h. A perspective that non-compliance could impact eligibility for W1 (pooled) funding.

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<sup>4</sup> "Per the [Charter of the CGIAR System Organization](#):

- Article 2.e: "CGIAR Policy" means a policy that is (i) a strategic, system-wide policy, which is critical to maintaining the reputation of the CGIAR System, proposed by the CGIAR System Board and approved by the System Council, or (ii) any other policy that may be adopted by the System Organization in accordance with its procedures for the adoption of CGIAR policies; and per
- Article 5.2.a: CGIAR Research Centers shall have the following responsibilities: a) act in accordance with this Charter, any and all CGIAR Policies and the CGIAR System Framework.

106. The EBC Director and Head of Investigations acknowledged EBC's successes but also challenges concerning retaliation, investigative authority, and information access. They proposed a charter to clarify EBC's role and interactions with Centers, and openness to collaborating with the AOC for guidance. They also noted EBC's limited role once investigation reports are communicated to Center management and Boards.

#### *Session Outcomes*

107. In summary, the Chair stressed the urgency of addressing EBC policy compliance issues across Centers to mitigate risks to funding and reputation. The Council recommended the Board Chairs' Network develop a statement acknowledging these issues, specifying current compliance levels, proposing actions for full system-wide adherence to CGIAR Policies, and outlining a timeline for implementation. This reflected the Council's firm conviction that achieving unified adoption of ethics policies is an urgent priority, requiring swift and coordinated action by Center leadership.

108. **SC19-AP4 – System-wide compliance with CGIAR ethics policies**

The System Council requested that the Global General Counsel work with the Assurance Oversight Committee and Board Chairs' Network (BCN) to develop a statement on system-wide compliance with CGIAR policies, to be produced shortly after the 31 October meeting of the BCN.

#### Spotlight Session — CGIAR's Scientists

109. The third Spotlight featured Dr. Cristiano Rossignoli, Impact Assessment Research Leader at WorldFish who co-leads the [CGIAR Aquatic Foods Initiative](#). He highlighted sustainable aquatic foods' vast potential to nourish populations, support livelihoods, empower women, curb environmental impact, and build climate resilience. His work identifies data gaps hampering decision-making and generates insights to transform aquatic food systems and shape a sustainable future.

#### Agenda Item 15: Update on CapSha

110. The Co-Chair introduced the session on CGIAR's Capacity Sharing for Development ('CapSha') function. He shared an example of capacity sharing between partners.
111. CGIAR's Global Director, Partnerships and Advocacy provided an update on CapSha. He noted that the pilot function is now operational, thanks to support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and highlighted that CapSha is being led collaboratively by CGIAR scientists from various Centers. He noted significant progress made in piloting a research engagement process with three key National Agricultural Research Institution (NARI) partners in three countries in the global south. CapSha is also establishing a CapSha breeders academy through engagement with the International Potato Center ('CIP'), the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture ('IITA'), the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and the Genetic Innovation Science Group. CGIAR in partnership with NARIs will, through the breeders academy, ensure

an adequate resource of breeders for the future.

112. The Global Director, Partnerships and Advocacy, described CapSha's goal to enhance CGIAR's engagement in the broader capacity sharing, training, and education ecosystem. He emphasized that CapSha plays a crucial role in shaping CGIAR's future capacity building, fostering mutual learning and knowledge exchange with partners. The current focus is on developing an action plan, including accelerating collaboration with PhD students and postdoctoral fellows, to expand research and development capabilities in the global south. Their goal is to integrate CapSha across the CGIAR portfolio, reflecting CGIAR's dedication to inclusive and collaborative agricultural research for development.

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

113. Council participants affirmed the fundamental importance of capacity development in CGIAR's work, encompassing science, policy engagement, and talent development. They supported CapSha as a prominent feature in the forthcoming research portfolio, encompassing all Initiatives and platforms. Additional reflections included:
- Expressions of commitment to the CapSha vision, coupled with requests for more details on plans to advance the CapSha pilot areas and implement the recommendations from the CGIAR High-Level Advisory Panel ('HLAP') report<sup>5</sup>;
  - Emphasizing the urgency of completing CapSha's development phase for integration as a key CGIAR portfolio function with some proposing elevating CapSha's visibility in the portfolio to the same level as that of Initiatives — with consolidated donor funding proposals developed jointly with NARES;
  - Acknowledging CapSha's vital role in ensuring that research is translated on-the-ground to impact, expanding CGIAR's footprint, and advocating for strategic expansion of CapSha pilot initiatives into critical areas where impact potential is high and NARES expertise lacking - such as building capacity for scaling up innovations through partnerships and methodologies, as well as in emerging research areas such as gender, youth inclusion and other priorities;
  - Acknowledgement of the value of blending technical and functional capacities for greater impact and sustainability;
  - Concerns about brain drain and lack of capacity retention policies in some countries/regions, advocating for heightened focus on institutional capacity building — acknowledging the many innovations delivered in regions and countries through CGIAR collaboration but recognizing that brain drain remains a challenge fueled by researchers returning home to inadequate facilities and support systems, thus making capacity building unsustainable;
  - Recognition of the need to build capacity for engagement on the policy side to motivate and sustain capacity gains;
  - Noting the increasing prioritization of food and nutrition security in capacity development programming;
  - Advocating for alignment between NARES, CGIAR RII, and donor objectives,

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<sup>5</sup> The CGIAR High-Level Advisory Panel (HLAP), established by the System Board to guide leadership in strengthening engagement with partners, issued its report with recommendations in 2022: [On Improving One CGIAR's Strategic Engagement with Partners](#).

- recognizing that NARES investments can enhance the impact of research initiatives and foster sustainable agricultural development; and
- i. A recommendation to launch an ambitious program aiming to refresh the CGIAR research talent pool, emphasizing global south representation, gender balance, and collaboration with top agricultural universities.
114. Management expressed appreciation for the Council's support for institutionalizing CapSha, outlining next steps including strategy development, defines CapSha's unique value proposition; expanding coverage; embracing participatory principles; and avoiding duplication and competition with the Initiatives. Management emphasized CapSha's coordinating role to identify, map, link, and synergize programs and provide them with more visibility. Management highlighted the need to foster a cultural change to support a principles-based approach to partner engagement, making CapSha more visible to funders in the new portfolio.

#### *Session Outcomes*

115. The Co-Chair highlighted the successful regional winter wheat breeding collaboration between Türkiye, ICARDA, and CIMMYT as a model of an impactful capacity sharing partnership, varietal improvement, and germplasm sharing that has significantly benefited farmers in Western Asia and Central Asia. This collaboration, which embodies the principles of CapSha, has resulted in the development of high-yielding, disease-resistant wheat varieties that have substantially increased wheat production in the region. The Co-Chair further emphasized the importance of continued collaboration and knowledge sharing to address the ongoing challenges faced by farmers in the region.

#### Agenda Item 16: Regions and Partnerships

116. At the Co-Chair's invitation, leaders from CGIAR Regions and Partnership ('R&P') underscored the pivotal role of R&P in scaling out and scaling up CGIAR scientific expertise and innovations by cultivating impactful partnerships across diverse regions and countries CGIAR serves, for large-scale impact.
117. The interim Managing Director, Regions and Partnership, highlighted R&P as the cornerstone of CGIAR's comparative advantage, harnessing strengths to transcend conventional approaches and drive equitable, effective partnerships, to expand CGIAR's on-the-ground impact and footprint. He outlined several R&P strategic objectives, including fostering robust partnerships through the engagement framework; raising Global South voices in CGIAR priority-setting, sharpening strategic focus on science-policy interfaces, and expanding reach and engagement through novel models. He stressed that R&P is:
- a. Articulating its value proposition, principles and strategic objectives as a new CGIAR function;
  - b. Playing a pivotal role in fostering partnerships and enabling scalable impacts;
  - c. Catalyzing integrated country-level CGIAR presence; and
  - d. Delivering responsive, fit-for-purpose approaches and systems for joint

innovation systems.

118. He noted progress in fostering robust CGIAR-NARES relationships and quality stakeholder engagement for co-designed research portfolio priorities. He highlighted additional workstreams underway, including guidelines and strategy to articulate CGIAR engagement, and a consultative methodology incorporating the engagement framework with a pilot dialogue model planned, which will be fully rolled out .
119. He noted the opportunity to update CGIAR's Intellectual Property ('IP') policies to encourage innovation and strengthen partnerships through key initiatives like public-private research consortia, venture funds to accelerate and scale up innovations, and pursuing patent protections and ground-breaking innovations to advance CGIAR's mission.
120. The Global Director, Partnerships and Advocacy, added that the revised engagement framework, which incorporates recommendations from the CGIAR High-Level Advisory Panel ('HLAP') report and internal and external stakeholder consultations, will soon be presented to the Council for endorsement. He emphasized the engagement framework's role in guiding partnerships within the new portfolio, noting that his team is aligning the forthcoming Partnerships and Advocacy strategy with the development of portfolio guidelines to clearly articulate CGIAR's approach to collaborating with partners.
121. The interim R&P Managing Director introduced Namukolo Covic, CGIAR Regional Director for East and Southern Africa and Country Convener for Ethiopia, who outlined efforts in mapping research in Ethiopia to CGIAR's five Impact Areas, national goals, and national partners, to identify potential synergies. She underscored ongoing consultations with national partners and the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture to discern avenues for CGIAR's contribution to Ethiopia's food system transformation pathway. She underscored the pivotal role played by CGIAR and national research partners in the establishment of Ethiopia's new comprehensive national framework for food systems transformation and nutrition, stemming from the UN Food Systems Summit. She indicated that CGIAR is at the forefront of efforts to generate research and evidence supporting Ethiopia in achieving its food security and nutrition goals. Other examples of collaborative initiatives cited included the food systems resilience program with the World Bank, the CGIAR Regional Integrated Initiative (Ukama Ustawi), and the CGIAR program on accelerated impacts of climate-related research in Africa (AICCRA).
122. In conclusion, the interim EMD emphasized the importance of consistent engagement across CGIAR as well as R&P's role in embedding activities in national systems to maximize impact. He acknowledged the progress made and emphasized the substantial potential for strengthening and expanding CGIAR's regional and country presence to fully deliver on its mission. He highlighted that although R&P has a key role in grounding science and fostering partnerships, more consistent coordination is needed across CGIAR. He advocated for greater investment in R&P as engagement evolves, to leverage its full potential for impact embedded locally.

*Key Discussion Areas*

123. Council participants expressed appreciation for the presentation. Additional reflections included:
- a. Acknowledgment of progress made on the engagement framework and a request for clarity on how research innovation and impact will be enhanced through its implementation;
  - b. Request to establish global partnership standards and accountability measures, including for private sector ESG adherence, in the engagement framework;
  - c. Request for clarification on how the HLAP recommendations are being implemented by CGIAR management;
  - d. Request for update on the R&P plan in Africa and partnerships with African research and innovation stakeholders;
  - e. Support for amplifying CGIAR's research innovations by harnessing significant investment resources for agricultural projects with country-level governments and multilateral institutions, including establishment of structured frameworks with development banks and leveraging their procurement processes;
  - f. An opinion on whether RII should proactively shape demand or be responsive to articulated regional needs; and
  - g. Suggestion to establish a science and partnership committee to address the five key functions of partnerships related to research, capacity building, custodianship, convening power, and advocacy.

*Session Outcome*

124. In summary, the Chair reiterated that CGIAR should be strategic in pursuing deliberate, mutually beneficial partnerships with organizations that possess complementary expertise and resources.

**Agenda Item 17: Harnessing Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation in CGIAR**

125. The Global Director, Digital and Data, emphasized the significant potential of Artificial Intelligence ('AI') in advancing the SDGs. She highlighted the need for a comprehensive digital strategy, encompassing AI applications and risk mitigation, to seize the opportunities for CGIAR to harness AI in an ethically responsible manner.
126. The Global Director noted the lack of a cohesive digital transformation strategy across CGIAR Centers. She illustrated current uses of AI in CGIAR, including predictive modeling and crop monitoring, while indicating missed opportunities without a unified strategy. She described plans for a cross-CGIAR AI working group to advance capabilities, guidelines, and ethics protocols.

*Key Discussion Areas*

127. Council participants recognized the imperative of a coordinated AI approach to prevent duplication and ensure compatibility across CGIAR. Additional reflections included:
  - a. Acknowledgment of opportunities to leverage CGIAR's data assets through coordinated AI applications for enhanced research and development ('R&D') efforts;
  - b. Concerns about potential risks of AI systems generating nonsensical results — and the need for robust risk management safeguards;
  - c. Affirmation of the necessity for coordinated and aligned AI initiatives within an integrated CGIAR digital strategy; and
  - d. Commitment to the ethical and responsible use of AI for the benefit of smallholder farmers in developing regions.
128. In response, the Global Director emphasized Digital and Data's comprehensive strategy focusing on open science, open innovation, and open governance models like those used for open-source platforms. She noted that these enable creation and innovation through an engaged community and principles. CGIAR aims to adopt this approach to promote accessible, beneficial, ethical, responsible, and trustworthy AI that advances its mission and impact, particularly for smallholder farmers in the global south. She contrasted this approach to AI developments in the global north dominated by corporate interests, underscoring CGIAR's commitment to harnessing AI for public good.

*Session Outcome*

129. The Chair underscored the need for regular updates as CGIAR's AI strategy and efforts evolve, emphasizing that AI will play a pivotal role in CGIAR's future work. He stated that this is a topic the Council will revisit frequently for progress reports as implementation advances, given its critical importance. Council participants concurred on the vital need for transparency and accountability as CGIAR moves forward in harnessing AI.

*Spotlight Session — CGIAR's Scientists*

130. The fourth spotlight session featured Dr. Vania Azevedo, leader of the [Biodiversity for the Future Program](#) and Genebank Head at the International Potato Center ('CIP') in Peru. Her presentation highlighted CIP's work conserving the genetic diversity of potato, sweetpotato, and Andean roots and tubers in their genebanks. This effort supports research for better crops, food security, and preserves smallholder farming traditions, aligning with CGIAR's mission.

*Agenda Item 18: Report from the Assurance Oversight Committee*

131. The AOC Chair reported on the Committee's recent oversight activities related to internal and external audit, governance, risk management, and AOC succession

planning.

132. On internal audit, she noted the function is largely decentralized currently, with Center-specific budgets and reporting lines to Center Boards and DGs. This was seen as limiting a unified methodology. She highlighted that the proposed future state includes an Internal Audit Center of Excellence to promote consistency. The Chief Audit Executive role is on hold pending Unified Governance Review completion. She reported plans include 53 Center-specific and 6.5 thematic engagements, resulting in approximately 100 reports to be delivered across Internal Audit teams in 2023, of which 31% are completed or their draft reports are with management (as of August 31, 2023).
133. On external audit, she reported no qualified opinions were issued for Centers' 2022 financial statements. However, variations in audit quality across Centers were observed. She highlighted efforts to select one or two common audit firms for 2024 to increase quality and consistency.
134. On governance, she noted that the AOC provided input to the Unified Governance Review, which identified ineffective governance processes and structures as one of the primary risks facing CGIAR. On risk management, she highlighted that a system-wide internal controls framework was being developed that should strengthen process controls, compliance, and likely bring cost savings, but will require Center buy-in and adequate funding.
135. The AOC Chair also highlighted AOC's collaboration with CGIAR's Audit, Finance, and Risk Committee ('AFRC'), through quarterly reports and discussions. This collaboration aims to enhance information sharing, avoiding duplication of oversight for the Council and System/Center Boards and ensure the seamless flow of critical information.
136. Responding to the Council's request from May (SC18), she presented the AOC's proposed succession plan to stagger membership extensions through 2025-2027. To ensure continuity, the AOC keeping the existing term of the current Chair<sup>6</sup> to June 2025, followed by staggered term extensions for one other independent member and one Council member to June 2026, and the remaining independent member and Council member to June 2027.

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

137. Council participants expressed appreciation for the AOC overview and endorsed the succession plan. Additional reflections included:
  - a. Calls for well-defined risk reporting procedures for informing funders and their constituencies emphasizing the need for substantial, easily accessible, and transparent risk management reporting, along with a suggestion to update the [CGIAR System Risk Management Framework](#); and
  - b. Affirmation of the importance of internal audit checks and balances;

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<sup>6</sup> In September 2023, the AOC elected current independent member Muriel Uzan as Chair through June 2025.

- c. Support for the adoption of a common external auditor approach to enhance consistency across the system.
138. In response, the AOC Chair acknowledged limitations in current CGIAR risk mapping approaches but noted progress identifying common risks across Centers. She emphasized the review of the risk appetite statement and the enhancement of the risk management methodology. Regarding external auditors, she affirmed Center Boards' authority in selection but encouraged adopting one or two firms for high-quality, cost-effective audits.

#### *Session Outcomes*

139. The Chair summarized the discussion, emphasizing the Council's support for transparent risk summarization for funders and emphasizing the importance of efficiency and cost-effectiveness in selecting an internationally recognized auditing company. In terms of varying approaches among Centers in handling common issues, he highlighted the need for a unified approach to prevent centrifugal forces solidifying Center authority over system-wide matters. The Council supported ongoing discussion and collaborative efforts to address these issues.
140. **SC19-DP3 – Assurance Oversight Committee succession plan**  
The System Council approved the Assurance Oversight Committee succession plan, as presented in document SC19-18b.

#### Agenda Item 19: Report from the Strategic Impact, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee

141. At the invitation of the Co-Chair, the interim SIMEC Chair presented an overview of SIMEC's activities, particularly its guidance to CGIAR's advisory bodies, including [CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council](#) ('ISDC'), the [CGIAR Standing Panel on Impact Assessment](#) ('SPIA') and the [CGIAR Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service](#) ('IAES'). The focus was on efforts to implement a systematic meeting timetable to synchronize oversight with the workplans of CGIAR's MELIA entities.
142. He presented an overview of SIMEC's activities and areas of focus during 2023. Highlights included providing feedback on and endorsing SPIA's proposed new operating model, subsequently approved by the Council in May; reviewing and endorsing proposed changes to the IAES TOR, providing feedback on and endorsing the 2024 workplans for IAES, ISDC, SPIA, and evaluation services, noting budget reviews are still underway by the AOC. He mentioned plans to coordinate workplan and budget approvals with the AOC in the future. SIMEC also endorsed the GENDER Platform evaluation and is providing guidance on the Genebank Platform evaluation and Regional Integrated Initiatives evaluability assessments.
143. He noted implementation of the Council-approved SIMEC TOR changes and deferral of appointing a permanent Chair until after UGR reform stabilization. He emphasized SIMEC's crucial role in ensuring rigorous evaluation and learning practices across

CGIAR. Additionally, he mentioned participating in the panel that selected the new SPIA Chair, noting that the panel struggled to recruit high-quality candidates from the global south; and expressing confidence in the selected candidate's expertise to enhance CGIAR's evidence generation.

144. In conclusion, the interim SIMEC Chair outlined upcoming priorities, including assessing Advisory Bodies' self-assessments and increasing collaboration with the AOC. SIMEC is also utilizing its new Terms of Reference (approved during SC18) to help build and facilitate relationships between the Advisory Bodies and CGIAR's internal Portfolio Performance and Project Coordination Units. The Chair also highlighted the recent addition of two new SIMEC members: Thomas Miethbauer (Germany) and Ravi Khetarpal (South Asia).

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

145. Following the presentation, Council participants expressed gratitude for SIMEC's oversight role, noting the contributions of its members, especially interim Chair Alan Tollervey. They highlighted SIMEC's essential function in connecting CGIAR entities and emphasized its valuable feedback. The usefulness of SIMEC's feedback and interactions was emphasized. Management emphasized SIMEC's role in meaningful performance monitoring for funders. The interim SIMEC Chair was also commended for his invaluable service on the recent EMD search committee, going above and beyond expected duties.

#### *Session Outcome*

146. The Council Chair reiterated the Council's appreciation for SIMEC members' invaluable contributions through their strategic engagement and commitment of time, and hoped this role would continue following the UGR outcomes.

#### *Agenda Item 20: Planning 2024 independent advising and evaluative evidence for System Council*

147. At the invitation of the Chair, the IAES Director presented two requests for the Council to reconfirm the 2024 workplan and budget for ISDC, SPIA, and IAES, including a US\$2.2 million increase for SPIA's expanded workplan endorsed by the Council in May (SC18); endorse updates to relevant IAES TOR updates. She also requested the Council's input on a concept note for 2024 Science Group evaluations.
148. In requesting endorsement of the IAES workplan and budget, the Director explained its alignment with key documents including the Council-approved 2022-2024 Advisory Services multiyear plan, the endorsed SPIA 2023-2030 plan, and the ISDC, SPIA and IAES TOR. Emphasizing the need for timely decision-making, she referred to the 2019 MOPAN report.<sup>7</sup> She thanked the Council for considering the 2024 workplan and budget, recommending carrying forward 2023 funds to cover the unanticipated SPIA

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<sup>7</sup> [2019 Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network \('MOPAN'\) report](#)

uplift. She expressed readiness to continue discussions with the AOC on this and provide further information as needed.

149. The Director requested endorsement of proposed IAES TOR updates, aligning with updated SIMEC and SPIA TOR. Lastly, she sought input on a proposed concept note for 2024 Science Group evaluations, highlighting their importance for portfolio steering, learning, and accountability.

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

150. Council participants expressed appreciation for the presentation. Additional reflections included:
  - a. Endorsement of the updated IAES TOR;
  - b. Endorsement of the adjusted IAES workplan, contingent on a final review of the 2024 budget by AOC, noting that the AOC's recommendation is expected by the end of November;
  - c. A recommendation for SIMEC to take a cautious approach when advancing budget recommendations to avoid undermining AOC's mandate, and requesting timely discussions between AOC and SIMEC for aligned Council decision-making;
  - d. A recommendation to avoid a rigid framework for the 2024 Science Group evaluations within the current portfolio structure, as it may become outdated by the end of 2024.
151. Management affirmed the Council's authority to allocate funding to IAES, coupled with an acknowledgment of the need for trade-offs and priorities within the CGIAR system. Management noted that the US\$10.4 million budget requested is a substantial increase on the previous year's budget and above the US\$9.7 million deemed "affordable" by the Executive Management Team.

#### *Session Outcomes*

152. Summarizing, The Chair noted the Council's acceptance for the AOC to conclude its review of the IAES budget and that the decision on the budget would be taken electronically.
153. **SC19-DP4 – IAES and supported independent bodies' 2024 workplan and budget**  
The System Council requested that its Assurance Oversight Committee complete their review of the budget within a month, after which it will be electronically submitted for System Council approval.
154. **SC19-DP5 – Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service terms of reference**  
The System Council approved the revisions to the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service Terms of Reference, as presented in document SC19-20c.

155. **SC19-AP5 – System Council committee endorsements of Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service workplan and budget**

The System Council requested that the Assurance Oversight Committee and Strategic Impact, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee hold timely, joint discussions in 2024 to enable the System Council to make informed decisions on the Independent Advisory and Evaluation Service workplan and budget.

Agenda Item 21: Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) in 2024

156. At the invitation of the Co-Chair, the ISDC Chair presented key elements of the 2024 ISDC workplan. He expressed gratitude to IAES and SIMEC for their strong support of ISDC's work. The ISDC Chair highlighted important aspects of the 2024 workplan including: portfolio evolution, megatrend assessments, the Science Forum, work on inclusive innovation, and developing common methodologies and approaches for agricultural research organizations.
157. The ISDC Chair sought clarity from the Council on their expectations for ISDC's review of the 2025-2027 portfolio document and research proposals. He emphasized that the 2025-2027 portfolio document prepared by management will aim to lay out a clear rationale and overarching structure for the full research agenda. ISDC stands ready to provide advice on this strategy for the Council and management to consider in finalizing the portfolio. The ISDC Chair stressed that the detailed research proposals should align with and further elaborate this high-level portfolio strategy. He also highlighted the importance of clearly articulating the science components in the portfolio documents, including outlining a broad-bracketed science agenda encompassing substantial research elements and some judiciously selected higher risk, higher reward components.
158. The ISDC Chair emphasized the importance of a comprehensive, CGIAR-wide portfolio view, noting ISDC currently has visibility of the pooled funding element, which comprises about 30% of CGIAR's work. He highlighted the challenge of providing scientific guidance without a complete portfolio view and requested the Council consider this when seeking ISDC's advice.
159. The ISDC Chair discussed the megatrend review, emphasizing how megatrend dynamics affect the CGIAR strategy and its impact areas. He mentioned nine identified megatrends and provided results for the gender, youth and social inclusion impact area. He noted that the full report of the review, covering all Impact Areas, will be available by late December 2023.
160. The ISDC Chair discussed inclusive innovation work, which stemmed from the 2022 Science Forum and led to guest editing a special issue of Agricultural Systems involving many CGIAR scientists. He stated this can influence global academic perspectives, with CGIAR becoming a leading institution on inclusivity through intellectual leadership.
161. He noted that the annual Science Forum provides an independently facilitated a 'safe space' for science conversations within CGIAR for scientists and funders, with the 2023

Forum focused on gender, youth and social inclusion.

162. The ISDC Chair raised a major concern about the limited bandwidth of Science Managing Directors and urged giving them the necessary space and time to effectively handle the tasks related to portfolio evolution to enhance portfolio quality and impact.

#### *Key Discussion Areas*

163. Council participants expressed appreciation and support for the work and expertise of ISDC, recognizing their crucial independent advisory role, especially regarding portfolio evolution. Additional reflections included:
  - a. Strong affirmation that ISDC requires visibility into the full CGIAR portfolio (W1 and bilateral) to provide effective strategic guidance aligned with evolving strategies;
  - b. Calls for the 2025-2027 portfolio to clearly articulate the full research agenda rationale, structure and linkages to guide detailed proposals;.
  - c. Mixed perspectives on level of radical rethinking needed to address global challenges;
  - d. Support for ISDC's megatrend analysis informing portfolio design, with requests to consider climate tipping points and longer-term 2050 implications;
  - e. Concerns on utilization of ISDC outputs like megatrend reports in shaping portfolio design, with calls for transparent follow-through to ensure that the expertise provided by ISDC informs the design of programs in the most effective manner;
  - f. Highlights of ISDC's work on inclusive innovation and shaping academic dialogues despite resource constraints; and
  - g. Encouragement for an activist approach by ISDC in reviewing and shaping the portfolio based on comparative advantage and strategic considerations.
164. Management expressed appreciation for the improved collaboration and communication with ISDC during the current portfolio development process compared to previous iterations. They acknowledged substantial challenges ahead in the next 1.5 years but noted that established procedures have equipped them more thoroughly for these challenges compared to before. While many Initiatives have adapted to global megatrends, the need for an agile portfolio was recognized. Management looked forward to ongoing insights from ISDC's independent review.

#### *Session Outcome*

165. The Council Chair highlighted the imperative of leveraging global crises to drive revolutionary advancements in agricultural research. Despite challenges in funding and coordination, there was optimism about CGIAR's capacity to take calculated risks and pioneer initiatives addressing complex global challenges. The Chair urged CGIAR to transcend incremental approaches, take bold risks, and shape an ambitious research agenda tailored to unprecedented times. '

## Agenda Item 10: Update on Unified Governance Review

166. At the invitation of the Chair, Neal Gutterson, in his capacity as Co-Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee on Governance, presented an update on the Unified Governance Review ('UGR') process aimed at helping CGIAR improve its impact at scale. He highlighted the collaboration and inclusivity throughout the process. He emphasized governance as a means to align with specific objectives, particularly CGIAR's 2030 Research and Innovation Strategy focused on addressing pressing food, land, and water system challenges under climate change.
167. He recalled that the UGR journey to date has involved significant work by the independent reviewer Morrow Sodali, the Committee, and numerous stakeholder events since May. This included organizing webinars and the multi-stakeholder UGR workshop held earlier in the week.
168. He stressed broad UGR workshop support for transitioning from the current unified governance model to an integrated partnership governance model that unleashes One CGIAR's full potential, embraces the IFA's integrated partnership framework and fosters funding alignment and integration.
169. He outlined the key changes emerging from the workshop, including:
  - a. Reducing the number of System Board members on Center Boards to two, plus one AFRC member, along with other Center-specific members per Centers' governing instruments;
  - b. Expanding the System Board to 11-13 members with a transitioned appointment process through a nomination committee with broader representation;
  - c. Shifting the System Board from solely governing the System Organization to governing the integrated CGIAR partnership;
  - d. Requiring policies and operating agreements for Center Boards, emphasizing their accountability to the System Board for specific elements of the partnership while maintaining IFA-established independence;
  - e. Simplifying System Council and Board roles, with the Council focusing on strategy, priorities, impact, finance, and assurance; and
  - f. Further definition of partner country roles, not just host country, but partner country roles in governance, such as, for example, providing input to the slate of potential System Board Members.
170. In summary, he conveyed optimism about securing pivotal agreements within the current year and transitioning towards the effective implementation of governance changes in 2024. The Ad Hoc Committee on Governance is set to formulate a procedural plan, with a dedicated drafting group assigned to refine the language, aiming for the completion of an initial draft agreement by mid-November. He underscored the anticipation of formal approval by mid-December, indicating potential modifications to governing documents either by the end of this year or in the early months of the next, contingent upon the finalization of the agreement.

*Key Discussion Areas*

171. Council participants commended the pragmatic, trust-building tone and outcomes of the recent UGR workshop. Additional reflections included:
  - a. Caution against an excessively ambitious timeline for implementing changes this year given required legal consultations, recognizing that more complex matters like host country agreements may necessitate additional consultation;
  - b. Recommendation for a phased, stepwise approach focused first on defining principles and addressing near-term Board composition “pain points”;
  - c. Emphasis on balancing form and function, harnessing ground-up support from scientists seeking greater collaboration under One CGIAR to drive governance changes;
  - d. Proposal to provide clear recommendations to CGIAR management without exhaustive legal details initially;
  - e. Rebuilding of trust considered crucial, though a legal framework remains essential for accountability; and
  - f. Optimism that shared objectives can translate into impactful research, acknowledging the urgent need to address climate change impacts on food systems.
172. The Global General Council discussed the practicality of swiftly putting the governance reform agreement into action among IFA Parties. A drafting group, which includes workshop participants, will work on producing actionable recommendations based on the workshop discussions. The primary focus is on making practical reforms before addressing more complex matters. Final decisions are scheduled for the Q4 2023 System and Center Board meetings.
173. If adjustments to Center charters are deemed necessary, the Global General Counsel noted that the process is expected to proceed smoothly when there's a consensus among stakeholders. He noted that, in most cases, host country agreements should not require revisions as they typically deal with high-level matters like granting privileges, immunities, and visas, which are essential but don't significantly affect the day-to-day operations of independent entities. However, he advised that if it turned out that changes to a host country agreement were necessary, there will be discussions with the host country to determine whether it's appropriate to address these issues at this point or if there are compelling non-legal reasons, such as political considerations, to delay such discussions for a later stage. System Framework and Charter amendment revisions will follow in 2024.

*Session Outcomes*

174. Summarizing the session, the Council Chair commended the practical and constructive atmosphere of the UGR workshop. He emphasized the need to balance structure and effectiveness while ensuring accountability within the integrated partnership framework. To address global research needs, especially the impact of climate change on food systems, he stressed the importance of refining the governance model to prevent delays and capitalize on the momentum for change.

## Agenda Item 22: Other Business and Meeting Close

### *Meeting Wrap-up and Close*

#### *Welcome to the Incoming EMD*

175. The Chair warmly welcomed the incoming EMD, Dr. Ismahane Elouafi, underscoring her instrumental role in global agricultural research. He expressed gratitude for her nomination and appointment.
176. The incoming EMD asserted that agriculture is at a crossroads particularly with respect to climate change. She stressed that CGIAR must clearly articulate its role and mission to maximize impact and, as CGIAR is not the largest player, she stressed that strategic partnerships are vital. She also noted that clarifying roles through governance reforms will allow CGIAR to fully leverage its assets, including extensive data and dedicated personnel, acknowledging that timely action is crucial. She conveyed optimism that after three years of trialing models, CGIAR can coalesce around a revamped governance framework enabling greater collaboration and impact.
177. She expressed her enthusiasm for joining CGIAR during this pivotal moment, uniting stakeholders around a bold mission and fortifying relationships with host and partner countries, and she emphasized the critical need for swift action to tackle pressing global food, agriculture and climate challenges.

#### *Next System Council Meeting (SC20)*

178. The Council Secretary announced that the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation ('Embrapa') will host the next Council Meeting (SC20) in Brasilia, Brazil, during the week of 10 June 2024. Appreciation was expressed to Dr. Pedro Machado, the delegate member from Brazil of the Latin America and Caribbean Developing Country Constituency, for his efforts in securing Embrapa as the host of SC20. Dr. Pedro Machado expressed Embrapa's President's enthusiasm to host SC20. Furthermore, he noted that Embrapa celebrated its 50 years this year 2023.

### *Final remarks*

179. The Chair took a moment to express the Council's appreciation for ICARDA DG Aly Abousabaa's extraordinary leadership and crisis management abilities that elevated ICARDA by fostering closer NARES engagement, reflecting that turmoil can catalyze positive transformations. The Chair also extended gratitude to the entire ICARDA team, with special mention of ICARDA Acting Deputy DG Michael Baum, Fatima and Khalid for their exceptional work and dedication and commitment of the entire ICARDA team.
180. In closing remarks, the Chair thanked participants for their unwavering energy, passion and commitment. He eagerly anticipated ongoing discussions on shared concerns and research impacts within One CGIAR.

## Annex 1: Participant List

19 <sup>th</sup> CGIAR System Council Meeting (SC19) Participants list		
Meeting Leadership	<b>Key:</b>	
<b>Chair:</b> Juergen Voegle (Day 2) <b>Co-Chair:</b> Metin Türker () and Stefan Kachelriess-Matthess (Germany - Day 1 only)	<p>(*) indicates that voting member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by the alternate</p> <p>(***) indicates that voting member/active observer is being represented at the meeting by another delegated representative</p> <p>(v) shows virtual participation of a participant</p>	
System Council Voting Members (listed alphabetically)	Member representative	Member Alternates & Other Delegation Members
African Development Bank	<b>Martin Fregene (V)</b> (Day 1)	<b>Alternate: Innocent Musabyimana (V)</b>
Australia	<b>Wendy Umberger (V)</b>	<b>Alternate: Julianne Biddle (V)</b>
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	<b>Ruben Echeverria</b>	<b>Alternate: Renee Lafitte</b> Other delegates: Rinn Self, Mariana Kim
Canada	<b>Flora Mak*</b>	Other delegate: François Cloutier (V)
Denmark	<b>Hanne Carus</b>	
East Asia & Pacific	<b>Yanzhou Qi (China)**</b>	Other delegate: <b>Rui Gu (China)</b>
European Commission	<b>Christophe Larose</b>	
Germany & Belgium	<b>Felicitas Röhrig (Germany)**</b>	<b>Alternate: Carol Durieux (Belgium)</b> Other delegates: Sarah Schmidt, Stefan Kachelriess (day 2) (Germany)
Ireland	<b>Patrick McManus</b>	Other delegate: Isabella Rae (V)
Japan	<b>Kosuke Minakuchi*</b>	Other delegate: Satoru Muranaka
Latin America and Caribbean	<b>Jorge Mario Diaz Luengas (Colombia)</b>	Other delegates: Lourdes Sofia Janampa Herrera (V); Renee Janette Pacheco Santos (V) (Peru) (Day 1); Pedro Machado (Brazil) (V)
Mexico	<b>Adriana Herrera-Moreno</b>	<b>Alternate: Rodrigo Ubaldo Riojas Martinez</b>
The Netherlands	<b>Timmo Gaasbeek</b>	
Norway	<b>Daniel van Gilst*</b>	

System Council Voting Members (listed alphabetically)	Member representative	Member Alternates & Other Delegation Members
Sub-Saharan Africa	<b>Garba Sharubutu</b> (Nigeria)	
Sweden	<b>AnnaKarin Norling (V)</b>	<b>Alternate: Madeleine Jönsson (V)</b>
Switzerland	<b>Manfred Kaufmann</b>	
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	<b>Alan Tollervey</b>	
United States of America	<b>Rob Bertram</b>	<b>Alternate: Jerry Glover</b> Other delegate: Gary Jahn
West Asia & North Africa	<b>Metin Türker</b> (Türkiye)	<b>Alternate: Tooraj Valinassab</b> (Iran) (V) (Day 2) Other delegate: <b>Didem Kokden</b> (Türkiye)
The World Bank	<b>Martien Van Nieuwkoop</b>	
Non-voting Ex-officio members	Member	Alternate/Other Delegates
CGIAR System Board	<b>Lindiwe Majele Sibanda</b> (Chair)	Other delegates: Patrick Caron (Vice-Chair)
Executive Director of the System Organization (a.i.)	<b>Khuloud Odeh</b>	
Center/Alliance Representative 1: Convener of the Chairs of Center Boards of Trustees	<b>Elsa Murano (V)</b>	
Center/Alliance Representative 2: Convener of the Center Directors General	<b>Mark Smith</b>	
Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)	<b>Selvaraju Ramasamy*</b>	
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)	<b>Shantanu Mathur** (V)</b>	
Active Observers	Representative	Alternate & Other Delegates
Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)	<b>Ravi Khetarpal</b>	<b>Alternate: Hildegard Lingnau</b>
CGIAR Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC)	<b>Holger Meinke</b> (Chair)	<b>Alternate: Nompumelelo (Mpumi) Obokoh</b>
SC Secretary		
Sylvia Oyinlola, Global Head, CGIAR System Council Support		

Invited Guests	Representative
Trustee of the CGIAR Trust Fund (World Bank)	<b>Jane Mwebi</b> (Trustee)
CGIAR System Council's Assurance Oversight Committee (AOC)	<b>Muriel Uzan</b> (Chair)
France	<b>Bernard Hubert (V) &amp; Jean Albergel</b>
CGIAR Standing Panel on Impact Assessment (SPIA)	<b>Travis Lybbert (V)</b>

<b>Additional invited guest to this meeting</b>	
Global Crop Diversity Trust	Stefan Schmitz
SB Chair Advisor	Myra Wopereis
Trustee's office	Vijayalakshmi Srinivasan
ISDC	Suneetha Kadiyala
<b>Session specific invitees</b>	
Agenda item 8	Charlotte Lusty, Senior Director, CGIAR Genebanks Initiative
Agenda item 10	Neal Gutterson, Co-Chair; Olwen Cussen, Secretary, UGR Committee (V)
Agenda item 5-6, 20 and 21	Andrew Ash, David Just, Fetien Abera, Lesley Torrance, Magali Garcia, ISDC Members
	Amy Beaudreault, Pierre Boulanger, ISDC Secretariat
	Svetlana Negroustoueva, Evaluation Function, IAES Secretariat
Agenda items 12-13	Lavanya Shrinagesh, Director, Gender Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (V)
Agenda items 12 and 13	Nicoline de Haan, Director, Gender Impact Platform
Agenda item 14	Alexandra Moyas, Director (a.i.) , Office of Ethics and Business Conduct
	Steve Korir, Senior Advisor, Investigations, Office of Ethics and Business Conduct
Agenda items 15 and 16	Aly Abousabaa, Regional Director, Central and West Asia and North Africa, ICARDA Director General
	Baboucarr Manneh, Regional Director for West and Central Africa (V)
	Namukolo Covic, Regional Director, Regional Director, East and Southern Africa (V)
	Temina Lalani-Shariff, Regional Director, South Asia (V)
	Juan Lucas Restrepo, Global Director of Partnerships and Advocacy (V)
	Javier Mateo Vega, Global Director, Partnerships & Communication, Alliance of Bioversity and CIAT (V)
Agenda item 17	David Abreu, Director, Technology Integration (V)
	Brian King, Senior Manager, Technology Integration (V)
	Jawoo Koo, Senior Research Fellow, Natural Resources and Resilience (V)

Additional participants (speakers/resources/support)	Name/Role
SC Chair advisor	Jonathan Wadsworth, Lead Agriculture Specialist, Agriculture and Food Global Practice, World Bank
CGIAR staff	Andrew Campbell, CGIAR's Executive Managing Director (a.i.) Ismahane Elouafi, Incoming CGIAR's Executive Managing Director (Day 2 only) Appolinaire Djikeng, Managing Director, Resilient Agri-Food Systems (a.i.) (Day 1) (V) Harold Roy-Macauley, Managing Director of Regions and Partnerships (V) Johan Swinnen, Managing Director, Systems Transformation Lotte Pang, Managing Director, Communications and Outreach Rutger de Witt Wijnen, Managing Director, Institutional Strategy and Systems (a.i.) and CGIAR General Counsel Sonja Vermeulen, Managing Director, Genetic Innovation Andre Zandstra, Global Director of Innovative Finance and Resource Mobilization Marion Barriskell, Global Director of Business Operations and Finance Fiona Bourdin-Farrell, CGIAR, Global Director People and Culture Michiel Roovers, Senior Director, Governance and Institutional Risk Julie van der Bliek, Director Multilateral and Bilateral IFRM Jamila Ntege & Madina Bazarova, CGIAR Acting Co-Chief Audit Executives (V)
CGIAR System Council Secretariat	Emma Quilligan, Senior Manager, System Council Support
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