

FUND COUNCIL AND FUNDERS FORUM
Rome, 12-14 June 2010

STATEMENT BY CONSORTIUM BOARD CHAIRMAN
CARLOS PEREZ DEL CASTILLO

PREAMBLE: I am grateful for the opportunity to address the Funders Forum and give an update on consortium activities.

UPDATE ON CONSORTIUM ACTIVITIES:

Since GCARD in Montpellier (end of March), the Consortium Board (CB) held two decisional meetings as well as a number of informal interactions, in order to advance its workplan in implementing the reform. Of particular note are:

- The second Consortium Board Meeting: 23-25 May (Rome)
- An informal meeting with donors 8 June (Washington)
- A Board 'virtual' meeting 15 June (via teleconference)

The progress I want to report now concerns the following six points: Strategy and Results framework (SRF); the mega-programmes (MPs); our interactions with the Fund Council and Trustee; the CEO search; the location of the Consortium headquarters; and the obtention of international organisation status.

1. Strategy and Results Framework

The Board reviewed the current version of the SRF, which the Centres submitted to the Board after taking into account the comments the Board made on a previous version of the document. The Board agreed that the version the Centres re-submitted was an improvement over the previous version, and it appreciated the Centres' efforts to address the Board's comments. The Board decided to accept the SRF and submit it to the Funders Forum for discussion and approval, to respond to the request from many donors that the SRF be discussed at the Funders Forum. However, the Board would like donors to appreciate that the Board has decided and already announced that it will take the lead in revising the document within a 3-year timeframe.

The Fund Office conducted an e-consultation on the SRF prior to the Funders Forum. Comments made during the e-consultation, including those from ISPC, have been noted by the Board. The Centers representatives that participated in the e-consultation made good interventions clarifying many of the points raised. The Board concurs with donors and others that the SRF is not a 'perfect' document. At its past meetings, the Consortium Board reiterated its views about the less than optimum process of developing, in parallel the SRF and the megaprogram portfolio. The circumstances that led to this are well known and I don't need to repeat them here. Rather than go back to 'ground zero' and start again, the Board considers that it is more effective to recognize that in the next iteration, the Board will be able to assume its responsibility (as proscribed by the Constitution) to lead the development, with the Centres, of a much revised document. It will do so on the basis of the lessons that it will draw from the first two years of implementation of the current SRF, and of the MP portfolio, and of the external advice it may seek on specific issues, including from the ISPC. I am looking forward to the discussions on this issue this morning. In the light of the debate in yesterday's Fund Council meeting, the Consortium Board is willing to advance the revision of this document to an earlier date.

2. Megaprogram Portfolio – ‘fast tracked’ MPs and MP concept notes

The Consortium Board made a number of decisions on the MP proposals it received.

A. Fast-tracked MPs

The proposals for ‘fast tracking’ the MPs on Rice, Maize, Wheat, Climate Change were each reviewed by three external reviewers, chosen for their internationally recognised competence in the subject and the absence of a conflict of interest with the MP. In addition, a gender expert externally reviewed each fast-tracked MP. External reviewers were asked to assess the proposals based on the Consortium Board’s criteria and additional, more specific, requirements. The Science Task Force of the CB examined the external reviewer’s comments and provided their recommendation to the full Board, while the interim Consortium Office analysed the budgets requested for credibility and realism.

The Board deemed that none of these fast-tracked proposals, as submitted, was ready for approval. Specific recommendations were provided for improving each proposal and producing a more realistic budget. The Board provided its feedback to the centres, along with the comments of the external reviewers. The Board considers these proposals are still being fast-tracked. The proposers will re-submit their proposals, after addressing all of the Board requests. The Board will examine each re-submitted proposal and decide virtually whether to approve the document for submission to the Fund Council or to request further improvements. At this point in time, significantly revised versions of the GRiSP and the climate change proposals have been re-submitted to the Board. The Board decided that GRiSP had adequately responded to the comments and suggestions of the Consortium Board as well as those of external reviewers, and as such, were ready for submission to the Fund Council. The revised version of the megaprogram on climate change is still being considered by the Consortium Board. Until now, we have not received new versions on MAIZE and WHEAT.

B – Balance of the MP portfolio

Twelve MP concept notes for the remaining areas in the MP portfolio were submitted to the CB. External reviewers assessed each concept note. Based on reviewers’ comments and the recommendation of the science task force to the Board, the Board decided that with the exception of one concept note (concerning cross-cutting genetic resources issues), the other 11 MP concept notes should be further developed into full proposals. The Board feedback and recommendations and the external reviewers comments have been provided to the proponents. The Board has also allocated proposal development grants to the lead centre of the remaining 11 MPs to facilitate an inclusive process of stakeholder consultations, and involvement including donors. (The Centres had to submit grant applications to the Board, following criteria set by the Board for these grant applications.) The timeline for the submission of the full proposals for these 11 MPs is flexible, since we want to make sure the recommendations are adhered to and a product of high quality is presented to the Consortium Board. However, the proponents have indicated they will resubmit their full proposals to the Board during the first week of September. At the request of the Fund Council, we will be submitting to this meeting the list of all concept notes that have been developed, outlining the title and objectives of each MP as well as the lead center. We have requested the lead centers to provide further information on the timetable for their stakeholders meetings and will distribute it to donors as soon as they are available.

C - Scoping studies.

The Board decided to commission two scoping studies on Gender research and crosscutting Genetic Resources issues. The Board is seeking advice on the most appropriate mechanisms, in the reformed system, for effectively addressing these two very important sets of issues.

Gender: This study will analyze the gender research the CGIAR has been implementing (as a baseline) and will make a recommendation to the Consortium Board on the most effective mechanisms for embedding gender research in the MPs. Particular importance will be attached to best practices in gender research, development of standardized indicators, methodology development, and capacity building for gender responsive R&D. The Terms of Reference for the study were prepared by the interim Consortium Office with inputs from the CGIAR gender research community and from donors especially interested in this work (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, USAID and Canadian CIDA). The terms of reference, approved by the Board, have been sent to potential consultants. The Board and the interim Consortium Office are currently reviewing the proposals and will select a consultant very shortly. The expected duration of the study is three months from the date of confirming the consultant. (The terms of reference are available from the interim Consortium Office.) The Consortium Board has suggested to fast trackers that they wait for the results and recommendations of these scoping studies before defining specific gender inputs into the MPs. With regard to the rest of the MP portfolio, the consultant of the scoping study will benefit from interaction with the sponsors and stakeholders in the development of the concept notes into full MPs.

Genetic Resources: This study will examine what would be the best mechanism to address crosscutting genetic resources issues especially in terms of advocacy and policy. The scoping study will include an analysis of the role of the Global Crop Diversity Trust and the Genetic Resources Policy Committee of the CGIAR. It will determine what are the cross-cutting issues that remain to be addressed in the agenda for genetic resources of the CGIAR system vis-à-vis what the Global Crop Diversity Trust the Genetic Resources Policy Committee do, and propose to the Board of the Consortium the best or most effective mechanism to deal with cross-cutting issues on genetic resources in the reformed system.

A parallel study on the real cost of conservation of the genebanks is jointly being undertaken with the CB and the Global Crop Diversity Trust. Once these studies are completed, the Board will look into the best mechanism or options for financing the genebanks (funding from window 1, increasing the capital endowment of the Global Crop Diversity, or other options, and we will come up with suggestions to the Fund Council before the end of the year).

The Board has approved the Terms of Reference prepared by the interim Consortium Office (with inputs from the Director General of Bioversity, the Director of the Global Crop Diversity Trust and from the ISPC) and potential consultants have been requested to provide a proposal by the third week of July. The expected duration of the study is three months from the time when a consultant is identified. (The terms of reference are available for the interim Consortium Office) Two platforms currently in the SRF – *Capacity Strengthening, Learning and Knowledge Sharing* and *Strategic Planning and Intelligence* – are to be considered more fully by the Board in the coming months. Capacity building is a crucial issue for many developing countries, which has been taken fully into account in the four fast-tracked MPs presented to the CB. We will ensure that this issue is fully integrated into the development process of other MP portfolios.

3. Interactions with the Fund Council and Trustee

Lynn Haight chairs the Board's Task Force dealing with the relations of the Consortium with the Fund Council and the Trustee. A number of consultations took place with donors that the Board found very useful. The task force has worked with legal counsel to offer a very constructive way to address various issues embodied in a number of legal documents that were tabled for discussion at the Fund Council meeting. The fund council has agreed to continue the discussion on these important documents including the chapeau and to finalise them by the end of August.

4. CEO search and selection

The CEO search and selection task force, which I chair, is managing the process of selecting a CEO. Through the support of an executive search firm, a number of promising candidates have been identified through external advertising, nomination and headhunting. I feel confident that work is progressing well and we should be ready to select the CEO by early September.

5. Consortium location

The Task Force for selecting a site for the Consortium headquarters is chaired by the Vice-Chair, Carl Hausmann. As you are aware, five sites have been short-listed by the Board, namely: Addis Ababa; Delhi; Montpellier; Nairobi and Rome. Letters have been sent to the Heads of State or Government of all these countries to inform them accordingly. Positive replies have been received from all of them. The task force has now engaged in face-to-face meetings with all of these governments. The governments of the five countries have been invited to submit a bid, along specific criteria developed by the Board and its legal counsel, by 15 August. I feel that we should be able to make a decision on the site by late August, early September. Meanwhile we have also started the process for the Consortium to obtain the legal status of an international organization.

6. International organisation status

The status of international organization, with its own legal personality under international law, will be provided to the Consortium through an international agreement among a few sovereign states. Legal counsel has drafted such an agreement and the government of France has kindly offered to act as Depositary for the agreement for which we are grateful. After the draft meets with the approval of selected countries, the final agreement will confer the status of international organisation to the Consortium. We hope that this status could be secure in a period of three to six months.