



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



The World Banana Forum (WBF)

Working together for sustainable banana production and trade

Thirteenth Meeting of the WBF Steering Committee (SC)

Attended by the Steering Committee members and Working Group coordinators

Tuesday, 7 November 2017

1. Opening speech by the WBF Secretariat

Mr. Pascal Liu welcomed the participants on behalf of the WBF Secretariat. Mr. Renwick Rose was elected as the chairperson for the meeting. Mr. Liu highlighted that the main objective of the meeting was to discuss the agenda and expected outputs of the Third Conference of the World Banana Forum that was to take place on the following days. Ultimately, he stated that the agenda of the conference had been adopted, and invited participants to provide their comments and suggestions on the organization of the conference, presentation of panels, and the expected outputs, as well as the process for the election of the new Steering Committee.

2. Final review of the organization of the conference

Mr. Liu began the discussions by providing a general breakdown of the expected participants, stating that approximately one fourth of participants were from companies and trade associations; a little less than one fourth were from civil society organizations; and another fourth represented national governments. There was also a good representation from intergovernmental organizations, including the ILO, UNCTAD and Bioversity International.

Mr. Liu further stated that there was a particularly strong representation from the Philippines, including representatives from the government and the Pilipino Banana Growers and Exporters Associations (PBGEA), which was highlighted as a particularly important achievement.

It was mentioned that the previous conference had slightly less than 200 participants attend,

while this conference achieved a registration of over 300 participants from approximately 51 countries, 17 governments and 15 individuals representing various retailers.

With respect to the programme of the conference, Mr. Liu mentioned that strict instructions had been provided to all moderators and panelists regarding allocation of time as well as panel and presentation guidelines.

Furthermore, Mr. Liu reported the interest of media organizations in attending the conference, including Radio Television Suisse, and informed participants that they may be asked for interviews throughout the days of the conference.

3. Presentation of the panel sessions

Mr. Renwick Rose highlighted the extensive discussions held at the level of the Organizing Committee with respect to the organization of the panel sessions and the role of various participants in order to enable constructive and dynamic discussions throughout the conference. He further stated the need to ensure that the conference had concrete outcomes, and that panelists make concrete proposals for the World Banana Forum.

Mr. George Jaksch mentioned the need to discuss how the proposals will be analyzed and administered, as well as the role of the Steering Committee in putting these proposals into action. The role of the moderators in recording proposals from panelists was also stressed, as it was to be their task to provide a summary of the key proposals made at the end of the conference. The moderators were to receive support from the WBF Secretariat, who would also be taking notes during the panel sessions.

Discussions arose regarding the scope of the proposals to be made by panelists. Some Steering Committee members agreed that proposals had to be practical, viable and realistic. Others claimed that the WBF was inducing the panelists to be ambitious in their proposals, and further asking them to make proposals that can be followed up and that they would be held accountable, which provided a slightly contradictory perspective.

Ultimately, some Steering Committee members expressed concerns regarding the time keeping throughout the conference, which would be vital in keeping the conference running on schedule. While there was a lot of planning done to keep the panellists on track, there were concerns regarding how participants would be informed and mobilized to return to the conference rooms at indicated times. Mr. Liu had mentioned there would be several mechanisms used to indicate to participants when the panel sessions would be resuming.

4. Expected outputs of the conference

One of the most important outputs expected from the conference was the recommendations and proposals made not only by panellists, but also participants. Mr. Rose stated that one of the most important tasks of the Steering Committee after the conference would be to analyze and prioritize proposals, and to discuss which ideas to take forward in both the short- and long-term. The need to consider and clarify the scope of the work that the WBF is capable of supporting, in relation to resources and capacity available, was also highlighted.

In order to begin discussions on the proposals as soon as possible, it was stressed that it would be necessary to have an informal Steering Committee meeting at the end of the conference on Thursday, 9 November 2017 or Friday, 10 November 2017. Ultimately, the meeting was held on 9 November, shortly after the concluding sections of the conference, and a two- to three-hour teleconference meeting in late November was agreed upon to discuss proposals in greater depth.

Furthermore, Mr. Liu had drafted a Declaration to be presented at the end of the conference, and asked Steering Committee members for their input and suggestions. Ultimately, it was suggested not to present a Declaration, but rather a Statement highlighting the success and strengths of the WBF, as well as the key outcomes of the conference. Three Steering Committee members agreed to meet on the days of the conference to draft the new Statement, which was then presented in the concluding session of the conference.

Decisions:

- Draft a Statement of the WBF to be presented at the end of the Third Conference of the World Banana Forum.
- Hold informal meeting of the Steering Committee on Thursday, 9 November 2017, after the official end of the conference.
- Hold virtual Steering Committee meeting in late November to analyze and prioritize proposals.

5. Discussion on the election of the new Steering Committee

Prior to the meeting, discussions had been held regarding proposals for the election of the new Steering Committee during the conference. However, during the meeting it was concluded that it would not be appropriate to hold the elections yet, as new members must be evaluated to verify that they meet various criteria, including those that are listed in the WBF Charter. It was mentioned that members must represent an organization and must dedicate sufficient time to

the Steering Committee. Ultimately, the Steering Committee should have (1) balanced geographical distribution, (2) balanced distribution of stakeholders, and (3) gender balance. However, it was stressed that the conference was an important opportunity to inform participants and interested parties of the upcoming Steering Committee elections and the opportunity to become members. Ms. Katie Knaggs agreed to provide a short presentation during both days of the conference to inform participants of the upcoming elections, as well as to highlight what it means to be a member of the Steering Committee. Those participants interested would then be able to express their interest by sending an e-mail to the WBF Secretariat, and the WBF would follow up in the following weeks, once it has been ensured that the necessary criteria have been met.

Decisions:

- Inform participants of the upcoming Steering Committee elections.
- Provide WBF Secretariat contact information so participants can express their interest in becoming Steering Committee members.

6. Additional Matters

Mr. Alistair Smith stressed the request from members and participants regarding the need to provide WBF documents and information in English, Spanish and French. The particular concerns arose from French-speaking members, as some of them reported that it has prevented them from participating in various activities in the past. The Secretariat will analyze this request, including the financial implications, and take action if budget permits.