GLOBAL FORUM ON AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE NARS-SC SECRETARIAT

approved by the NARS-SC in its meeting of 26 October 1997 in Washington

A. Background and Rationale for a NARS Steering Committee (NARS-SC) Secretariat

1. The first Global Forum for Agricultural Research (GFAR) held in Washington DC under the Chairmanship of the President of IFAD adopted a Declaration for a Global Partnership in Agricultural Research and a Global Plan of Action. As an historical event, the GFAR represented the culmination of a large consultative process consisting of various events/decisions of global or thematic nature. The main ones are the renewal of the CGIAR, the two-year NARS-driven consultative process commencing in December 1994 at the IFAD-convened Rome International Consultation on NARS’ Vision of International Agricultural Research and the European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development which urges the ARIs to be part of that process. The “NARS” initiative was co-sponsored by a core Facilitating Group composed of EU, FAO, IFAD, ISNAR, The World Bank and Swiss DC, with initial financial contribution also from Denmark, Japan and the Netherlands.

2. At the GFAR, a Global Forum Steering Committee (GFSC) was established and mandated to consult with all the stakeholders and monitor the translation of the Action Plan into a detailed program of activities. At its first meeting during the Cairo CGIAR MTM held in May 1997, the GFSC recognized that the tasks and functions entailed by the Global Plan of Action were manifold and diverse, and that the NARS constituency was complex. It was therefore decided that the implementation of the Global Plan of Action would require two Secretariats – one for the NARS- Steering Committee (NARS-SC) and one for the GFSC, with distinct but complementary functions.

B. Basic Guiding Principles for Establishing the NARS-SC Secretariat

3. The NARS-SC recognizes a number of basic principles that underly the creation and operation of the Secretariat. These are:
3.1. Autonomy and Accountability

- Autonomy, ownership and accountability to NARS community. The Secretariat is accountable to the NARS community through the NARS-SC;
- The Secretariat will enjoy autonomy from its host and supporting organizations in the execution of decisions and policy actions mandated by the NARS-SC;
- This autonomy will include the right to allocate funds within budgets approved by its donor organizations, excluding funds devolved to national, sub-regional, and regional levels.

The Secretariat, however, will follow administrative policies and practices negotiated with its host organization and approved by the NARS-SC.

3.2. Complementarity and additionality of activities

- Complementarity and rationality of resource use: the Secretariat will focus on activities that are essential to strengthening the NARS collective voice in the global system and strengthening partnerships in a way that is complementary to other actors;
- Additionality: explicit value addition to existing structures serving NARS, especially those which are established at regional/subregional levels.

3.3. Scope and Focus

- Specificity: focus on sustainable food production, rural poverty alleviation, environment and gender sensitivity, related with public goods of global nature and which are issues shared with the CGIAR; the NARS Secretariat will support its constituents at regional, subregional and national levels in addressing a broad scope of agricultural and natural resources research issues which include, but are not limited by, the commodity and thematic concerns of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research;
- Global scope: the NARS secretariat will facilitate the work of its constituents by focusing on the implications for NARS of global changes and how they may influence such changes or adapt to them at the national and regional levels.

3.4. Subsidiarity

- Importance of bottom-up NARS-driven agenda;
- The execution of NARS, sub-regional, and regional activities will be planned and carried out in a bottom-up manner. Actions will be taken by actors at the lowest level NARS (i.e., sub-regional) at which they can efficiently and effectively be done. The Secretariat will facilitate such activities but not act directly;
- The Secretariat will encourage studies and exchange of ideas at the NARS and sub-regional levels needed to achieve the goals of the NARS-SC.

4. As a consequence, the NARS Secretariat will endeavor to remain a lean facilitating body in adequation with agreed operational activities.
C. Goal and Key Objectives

5. The overall goal is to provide support to the NARS-SC and its constituencies composed of the NARS regional fora and sub-regional groupings, for developing a stronger collective voice for the NARS community in the setting and implementation of a global agricultural research agenda responsive to the threefold objectives of poverty alleviation, food security and sustainable use of natural resource.

6. The specific functions of the Secretariat is to facilitate the achievements of the following key goals included in the Global Plan of Action:

   a. To enhance, through sub-regional/regional fora, the capacity of NARS to generate and transfer, in a participatory mode, appropriate technology that responds to the needs of the end users;

   b. To improve priority setting to better reflect NARS’ views in the global research agenda;

   c. To strengthen partnerships among NARS and between NARS and others stakeholders;

   d. To improve communication (or enhance the links) with other secretariats in the CGIAR and in the Global Forum.

D. Functions of the NARS-SC Secretariat

7. In order to fulfill the above mentioned goals and key objectives of providing support to the NARS community, the Secretariat will, under the guidance of the Chairman of the NARS-SC, undertake the following functions.

   i). Assist regional fora and sub-regional groupings to support institutionalization of the broader concept of NARS at the national level;

   ii). Assist regional fora and sub-regional groupings in deliberations/consultations for a common position on agricultural research issues of global, regional and sub-regional interest, in the context of the global research agenda;

   iii). Assist in priority setting and development of a research agenda at national and sub-regional levels;

   iv). Assist regional and sub-regional fora in developing mechanisms for systematic consultation among NARS on their major role in participating in the development of the CGIAR system-wide research agenda and in providing more effective inputs in the emerging Global Agricultural Research System, and in influencing priority setting exercise at a global level;

   v). Liaise with the GFSC Secretariat to enhance synergy and improve the NARS’ access and contribution to the Electronic Global Forum on Agricultural Research (EGFAR), and with other secretariats of the CGIAR or the Global Forum.
vi). Promote and facilitate inter-regional/subregional linkages and exchange of information and experiences, that may contribute to the strengthening of NARS in achieving their objectives.

vii). Assist regional/subregional fora in the formulation and implementation of NARS/NARS collaborative research initiatives, and in interfacing with IARCs, ARIs, universities and the private sector, drawing on the comparative advantage of each partner.

viii). Support the NARS-SC in its collaboration with IFAD, ESDAR and the Global Forum Donor Support Group in mobilizing resources from donors who are interested in financing collaborative agricultural research initiatives among NARS, and between NARS and other partners, as well as other activities of the Global Forum related to the objectives of the GFAR.

ix). Undertake or coordinate those studies or activities that the NARS-SC may consider appropriate in promoting the development of the GFAR.

E. Institutional Status of the NARS-SC Secretariat

8. The NARS-SC Secretariat is a support organ for the NARS-SC which is composed by the five regional fora chairs. One of the members of the steering committee is elected as chairman on a 3-year rotational basis. The NARS-SC Secretariat will participate in the meetings of the NARS-SC, being responsible for providing the necessary support to these meetings. The work programme of the Secretariat will be prepared by the Secretariat and submitted for approval to the NARS-SC. IFAD, FAO, ISNAR and the GFSC Secretariat will be invited to participate in relevant NARS-SC meetings.

9. The Secretariat will be headed by an Executive Secretary to be recruited among the NARS community. This person may or may not be hired as a staff member of one of the three Agencies. The Executive Secretary will report to the NARS-SC. The size of the technical and administrative support staff needed will be determined on the basis of a three-year work program.

10. The NARS-SC Secretariat will be established as a facility jointly supported by FAO, IFAD and ISNAR, with contributions from other donors. The Secretariat will be located in FAO, although it will function as an autonomous institution following the principles mentioned above. In fulfilling its functions, the Secretariat will carry out programmes or activities with the support of FAO, IFAD, ISNAR and other relevant agencies.

11. The NARS-SC Secretariat is conceived as a small support group that builds upon capacities already existing in FAO, IFAD and ISNAR. Nevertheless, it will require some limited funds to be able to function and carry out its activities. In order to facilitate this, the possibility of establishing a Donor Support Group will be explored. This group would be constituted by those donors interested in contributing to the operationalization of the Global Forum on Agricultural Research, and specially to the strengthening of the participation of NARS in this Global Forum. IFAD\textsuperscript{1} will initiate the process of the establishment of this Donor Support Group, and collaborate with it in seeking to mobilize the required funds.

\textsuperscript{1} A discussion paper has been circulated, entitled "Establishment of a Donor Support Group for the Global Forum on Agricultural Research."