REPORT ON THE FIRST GFAR SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

ROME, FEBRUARY 5 AND 6, 1998

The GFAR Support Group met at the IFAD Headquarters in Rome, Italy, on the 5th and 6th of February. The main objective of the meeting was to discuss the first draft of the Programme of Work and Budget for the Global Forum, and to provide advise on how best to orient the process of operationalization of the GFAR. Four background documents were presented at this meeting, as a basis for discussion: (a) “GFAR Plan of Action 1998-2000”, (b) “Programme of Work and Budget 1998-2000”, (c) “NARS Steering Committee Secretariat: Modalities of Establishment and Timetable”, and (d) “Global Forum Secretariat: Modalities of Establishment and Timetable.”

The purpose of this report is to highlight the main issues discussed at the GFAR Support Group meeting (section 1), the main recommendations that emerged in terms of how best to present the budget requirements of the GFAR (section 2), the main results obtained (section 3), and the next steps that are bein envisaged (section 4).

1. General Discussion on the GFAR and on the Functions and Roles of the two Secretariats

It was considered that the GFAR Plan of Action 1998-2000 provides a very good framework to orient the activities of the Global Forum. The other two documents related to the modalities of establishment and timetable of the NARS and the GF-SC secretariats define the emerging coordination structure that is considered necessary to operationalize the Global Forum. The discussion that took place in the Support Group Meeting was basically aimed at focusing and further developing a common understanding among the members of the Support Group, related to the functions and roles of the two secretariats that are being established, as well as the different roles played by the various stakeholders that constitute the Global Forum. This discussion builds upon the framework described in sections 1, 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 of the GFAR Plan of Action 1998-2000. In doing so, the Rome meeting helped to bring more clearly into focus the role of the two secretariats, and the nature of their activities. The main ideas that came out of this discussion are as follows:

1.1. Emphasis was placed on the importance of distinguishing two different levels of analysis and of action:

The Global Forum on Agricultural Research: In this first level we have the activities carried out by all stakeholders involved: NARS, Regional/Subregional Fora, IARCs, ARIs, the private sector, NGOs and donors. The activities of the Global Forum are not only limited to what the secretariats can do, nor to the general meeting every three years.
The nature and objectives of the GFAR are clearly spelled out in the Plan of Action 1998-2000.

The Secretariats of the GFAR, and the concrete promotional/support activities they carry out. The secretariats are only one component of the GFAR. Further comments are made below on the roles and types of activities carried out by the secretariats.

1.2. Importance of clearly identifying the value-added that is contributed by these two levels: Various value-added effects are being generated by the two dimensions mentioned in the previous points:

Value-added that is achieved by the interaction between the various actors involved in the Global Forum. In identifying this value-added, the following elements were highlighted: (a) the synergisms that are generated by research partnerships, by a more active involvement of all stakeholders and by having stronger NARS; and (b) the importance of having a forum for the exchange of ideas among the various stakeholders, and for the discussion/analysis of global issues of interest to all of them. An example of the latter is the discussion of policy options with respect to the role of biotechnology in agricultural research, and how to develop and manage a strategic alliance between the various stakeholders involved (i.e. NARS, IARC’s, Private Sector, etc.).

Value-added that is achieved by the strengthening of NARS. This value-added is related to the critical role they play in assuring development-impact of agricultural research and technological development. In the strengthening of NARS, an issue that is receiving particular attention is that of increasing end-user involvement.

Value-added by strengthening the capacity of NARS Regional and Sub-regional Fora to promote inter-country collaboration and regional/sub-regional cooperation in technology development.

Value-added that is achieved by the two GFAR Secretariats in facilitating the implementation of many of the previous objectives and functions. Importance of specifying this aspect in each proposed activity.

1.3. Roles of the GFAR Secretariats:

A more detailed analysis of the roles of the two secretariats is presented in the previously mentioned documents: “NARS Steering Committee Secretariat: Modalities of Establishment and Timetable”, and “Global Forum Secretariat: Modalities of Establishment and Timetable”. In discussing the mandate of these two secretariats, and the value-added that they can contribute to the strengthening of agricultural research for development, the Support Group highlighted the importance of six roles these two secretariats play:
Advisory role, with respect to the activities to be carried out in the different Lines of Action of the GFAR (see Plan of Action). This implies establishing a credibility with donors, and with NARS and others stakeholders.

Catalytic/promotional role, which refers to the role the secretariats can play in the design and initiation of activities or projects to be carried out in the framework of the GFAR. In most cases these activities will be carried out by the various stakeholders involved, namely NARS, Regional/Sub-regional Fora, IARCs, ARIs, NGOs and the private sector.

Brokerage role, related to facilitating partnerships and strategic alliances among the various stakeholders.

Policy analysis role, which refers to the role the GFAR can play in facilitating the discussion of global policy issues related to agricultural research, that are of interest to the various stakeholders. This has to do with developing a forum where global policy issues can be discussed, and where concerted action can be fostered, seeking the participation and involvement of the relevant stakeholders.

Strengthening participation and integration role: This role refers to two important functions of the GFAR. The first one refers to strengthening the participation of the various stakeholders in the GFAR, specially the participation of NARS, as well as the interaction between NARS and the CGIAR. The second one refers to the need to strengthen NARS as a key element in the technology generation-dissemination-utilization (innovation) continuum. The development of strong NARS and strong national institutions and programmes related to technology transfer/adoption and rural innovation in developing countries, is a basic prerequisite, if international agricultural research is to have an effective development impact. This is why the integration and strengthening of NARS plays such a key role in the GFAR. This role is mainly related to the activities carried out, or promoted, by the NARS Secretariat.

Advocacy role: This refers mainly to the role the NARS-SC Secretariat can play vis-à-vis donors, in seeking to promote greater support for NARS and Regional/Sub-regional Fora.

Recommendations with Respect to the Presentation of Budget Requirements

In the Rome meeting, the GFAR Support Group recommended to revise the structure and content of the first version of the “Programme of Work and Budget”, on the basis of the following recommendations:

To divide each budget into two parts related to: (1) the “Core Budget” which is necessary to initiate the GFAR, and (2) “Operational Activities” to be implemented on a project-support basis, according to budget availability. This second group is made up by activities
that are relevant for the development of the various Lines of Action of the GFAR Plan of Action, but are not compulsory from the beginning.

In order to more clearly reflect the effective budget requirements, it is better to separate the in-kind contribution made by the host and/or facilitating agencies, from the additional funding requirements to be raised with the assistance of the Support Group. Nevertheless, for transparency purposes full budget information will also be provided, reflecting total investment.

In order to reduce costs, it was considered advisable to carefully review the unit costs of the various activities that are being envisaged, in order to better evaluate the real financial requirements.

In preparing the revised version of the budget, a more limited number of operational activities will be chosen from the Programme of Work and Budget that was presented in the Rome meeting. In doing so, these recommendations will be taken into consideration. More detailed information will also be provided on implementation arrangements.

The project-profiles should be revised in order to include two additional sections in each proposed activity: (a) value-added by the respective project or activity; and (b) other related activities that may be underway.

It was recommended to merge the two operational budgets in order to show more clearly the complementarity between the two secretariats.

Once the revised version of the budget is ready, different funding sources should be explored in the various countries (not only the desks or offices related to the CGIAR). This could lead to tapping financial sources not previously related to international agricultural research.

On the basis of the above considerations, a revised version of the GFAR Programme of Work and Budget 1998-2000 (February 1998) has been prepared, which is being distributed along with this report.

Financial Pledges in Support of the GFAR

An important step towards the operationalization of the GFAR was taken in Rome, through the pledges made by the donors who were present at the First GFAR Support Group Meeting, and through the offers made by other donors who also confirmed their interest in collaborating with the establishment of the Global Forum, even if they were not able to attend personally because of agenda problems. The background document which was tabled was the “GFAR Programme of Work and Budget 1998-2000”, to which were added short “project profiles” for the different activities proposed.
IFAD was the conveyor and chair of the meeting. EU, France, Germany and Italy sent representatives in addition to the WB/ESDAR, FAO and ISNAR. The Netherlands and Belgium could not be present but sent messages of support with an indication of possible commitments.

The main conclusions in terms of pledges of support for the Global Forum are (in alphabetic order):

a) **Belgium:**

   Commitment of BEF 2,000,000 for the GF-SC Secretariat
   
   Commitment of BEF 2,000,000 for the NARS-SC Secretariat
   
   Commitment of BEF 8,000,000 for the European Forum Secretariat (through NATURA)

b) **Canada:** Commitment of Cad$ 100,000 for the establishment of the EGFAR (Electronic Global Forum)

c) **CGIAR:** A direct contribution of the CGIAR was approved in principle by the CG Financial Committee, during ICW97.

d) **European Commission:** No firm and direct commitment was made, but the EC mentioned 3 possibilities to explore:

   Support to the NARS Secretariat in general and to some Regional and Sub-regional entities in particular (e.g. planned support of ECU 2 millions to ASARECA, CORAF and SACCAR) through development funds (DG8 and DG1B). Furthermore, the various Regional For a can also request support from the EC through the development aid programme of the Commission, if this reflects a regional priority.

   Support to promote scientific partnerships (DG12)

   Support through mobilization of the EIARD (European Initiative for Agricultural Research for Development).

e) **FAO:** Contribution as the host agency of the NARS Secretariat in staff and office facilitates. Estimate of US$ 900,000 for 1998, 1999 and 2000.

f) **France:** Commitment of US$ 500,000 for 1998 and 1999 (using their Trust Fund with WB), to pay for the GFAR Executive Secretary and some global studies (e.g. biosafety and non-CG crops).
g) **Germany**: No firm and direct commitment at this stage but very supportive of the process.

h) **IFAD**:  
Exceptional contribution of US$ 200,000 for 1998 and 1999 to contribute to the recruitment of the NARS Executive Secretary.

Possibility for the NARS Secretariat to tap up to US$ 100,000 every year for case studies and/or development of partnership proposals.

Access to IFAD grants for research and training if sound full project proposals are submitted to them.

i) **ISNAR**: Contribution through the secondment of a Senior Adviser to the NARS Secretariat. Estimate of US$ 160,000 annually.

j) **Italy**: Agreement to use part of the Italian Trust Fund with IFAD to support the NARS Secretariat. The exact amount is to be determined.

k) **Netherlands**:  
Commitment for an unrestricted contribution to the NARS Secretariat of US$ 75,000 for 1998.

Commitment to support an APO for 1999 onwards (either Dutch or from a developing country).

l) **Sweden (SIDA)**: Contribution of US$ 200,000 WB/ESDAR (and the GFAR Secretariat) to work on “IPR’s and Genetic Resource Policy Management”.

m) **WB/ESDAR**: Contribution as the host agency of the GFAR Secretariat in staff time and office facilitates. Estimate of US$ 600,000 for 1998, 1999 and 2000.

The above-mentioned pledges of support for the Global Forum are summarized in the next table:

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<tr>
<th>Donor</th>
<th>Functioning of Secretariat</th>
<th>Operational Activities</th>
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<td><strong>NARS Secretariat:</strong></td>
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Pledges of Support for the GFAR
a) IFAD $ 100,000 $ 100,000

b) Netherlands $ 75,000 (+ APO) -

c) Belgium $ 60,000 -

3.2. GF-SC Secretariat:

a) Belgium $ 60,000 -

b) France $ 26,000 -

c) IDRC - $ 85,000

On the basis of the above figures, we have an estimated annual contribution of U.S. $235,000.00 for the Core Budget of the NARS Secretariat, and of $86,000.00 for the Core Budget of the GF-SC Secretariat (for a total of U.S. $321,000.00).

The above figures do not include the very important contribution that the host and facilitating agencies are making to the establishment of the two secretariats: World Bank, FAO and ISNAR. These contributions are being made through office space, office infrastructure and equipment, salary of persons that are being financed by the host and facilitating agencies, and other operational costs. As pointed out above, one of the conclusions that was reached in the meeting of the GFAR Support Group is that it was better to separate the total (integrated) budget, where these contributions do appear, from the formal budget that identifies the specific additional funding requirements, over and above what the host agencies are contributing.

In terms of the budget for operational activities, $185,000 have been pledged (by IFAD and IDRC). Many other donors expressed interest in supporting several of the activities or projects included in the proposed Programme of Work and Budget 1998-2000 that was presented in Rome, but on a project-support basis. A tentative identification of the projects that could generate more interest was made. It was agreed that further work would be done in February through April, in order to present in Brasilia a more elaborated project proposal in each case (in the Rome meeting only a one-page project profile was presented for each proposed activity).

Another important consideration is the minimal time horizon for the pilot phase of the development of the GFAR Secretariat. It is considered that we should seek to assure funds for at least three years (1998-2000), in order to have the minimal time for the programmes to be launched and initiated, as well as the work to be carried out with the Regional Fora and other stakeholders, to start to have any real impact.
Next Steps in the Process of Operationalization of the GFAR

The first step will be to circulate this report to all donors and institutions that could be interested in collaborating with the GFAR, along with the revised version of the Programme of Work and Budget 1998-2000. The main objective of this first step is to seek to mobilize additional pledges of support. The target that is being pursued is that of assuring the estimated level of minimal budget requirements, that would assure the minimal resources for the initiation of the GFAR secretariat. If this level of pledges for support is not reached, it will not be possible to proceed with the next steps.

The second step will be to install the Selection Committee for the Executive Secretary of the NARS-SC Secretariat that is being established in FAO. One of its members will have to be selected as chairman of this committee. ISNAR has offered to contribute US $ 5,000 to cover partially the costs of this process, which basically involves an international announcement in a recognized journal.

The third step is to formalize with FAO an agreement for the establishment of the NARS-SC Secretariat. The Chairman of the NARS-SC, Fernando Chaparro, met in the first week of February with the Director General of FAO, Jacques Diouf, to discuss this matter. The Director General of FAO expressed a clear support to the establishment of the NARS Secretariat in FAO, pointing out the importance he attaches to the role that the Global Forum can play in strengthening NARS, and thus in increasing the effectiveness of international agricultural research. He also highlighted the close relationship between the Lines of Action being pursued by the GFAR (see Plan of Action) and FAO’s own programmes (such as the case of the information activities being carried out in ____). This complementarity will greatly facilitate a dynamic working relationship between FAO and the NARS Secretariat. In meetings with Henri Carsalade, Assistant Director-General SDD, Louise Fresco, Director, Research, Extension and Training Division, and other FAO staff members, a more detailed analysis was carried out of the establishment process, and of the characteristics and requirements of the NARS-SC Secretariat. It was agreed that the TAC Secretariat could serve as the operational model, given the fact that the TAC Secretariat has very similar characteristics (such as autonomy and other similar requirements). It was agreed that the most expeditious way of formalizing this process is through a Letter of Understanding (LOU), that would outline the various points of the agreement. A draft of this LOU will be prepared by FAO in the second half of February (February 16-28), so it can be circulated to the members of the NARS Steering Committee in early March.

The fourth step is to formalize with ISNAR an agreement for their contribution to the establishment of the NARS-SC Secretariat, through the secundment of a senior advisor. In the first week of February the Chairman of the GF-SC met with the Director General of ISNAR, Stein Bie, to review the implementation process of the Global Forum, and the role of ISNAR in this process. The Director General confirmed the clear interest of ISNAR
to actively participate in the establishment of the NARS-SC Secretariat, through the secundment of a senior staff member. Furthermore, in a meeting held with a group of ISNAR management and staff members, a very interesting analysis was made of the complementarities that exist between the Lines of Action of the GFAR Plan of Action and the programmes of ISNAR. This will facilitate collaboration between the GFAR and ISNAR in the near future, strengthening the effective involvement of NARS and of Regional/Sub-regional Fora in these efforts. The Director General of ISNAR will be submitting the name of the candidate he has in mind for the posting (secundment) to the NARS Secretariat. This information will be sent to the members of the NARS Steering Committee, for their agreement. A Letter of Understanding (LOU) will then be drafted to formalize the agreement.

The fifth step refers to the additional work that has to be carried out in March and April in further developing the operational activities that are being integrated into the possible Programme of Work and Budget, of both the NARS Secretariat and the GF-SC Secretariat. This will allow a more substantive discussion of these activities in the GFAR Support Group Meeting that will take place in May in Brasilia (during MTM98).

The sixth step is the consultation with their respective constituencies that the members of both the Global Forum Steering Committee and the NARS Steering Committee should carry out in March and April, for the replacement of the Chairmen of both the GF-SC and the NARS-SC. This is analyzed in more detail in two different recent messages that have been sent to NARS-SC members and GF-SC members on this topic.

Finally, in May we will be having the next meetings of the GF-SC, the NARS-SC and the GFAR Support Group in Brasilia. In the various meetings that will take place at MTM98, the following decisions are expected to be taken:

Selection of the Executive Secretary of the NARS Secretariat, by the NARS-SC. As pointed out above, this post will be widely advertised and a selection committee is being established by the NARS-SC.

Election of the new Chairman of the Global Forum Steering Committee, by the GF-SC.

Election of the new Chairman of the NARS Steering Committee, by the NARS-SC.

Formalization of the respective agreements (LOUs) with the host and with the facilitating agencies, for the functioning of the secretariats (World Bank, FAO and ISNAR).

Approval of the final version of the GFAR Programme of Work and Budget 1998-2000, by the GF-SC, the NARS-SC and the GFAR Support Group.
It will be possible to successfully complete or take these five decisions in May, only if we are able to advance the various preparatory activities described above, that have to be carried out in February, March and April. This implies following quite a tight timetable in the coming weeks. But with the collaboration of all the persons and stakeholders involved, it will be feasible. A critical step in this process is the first step mentioned above. If we do not reach the estimated level of minimal budget requirements in terms of pledges of support, the timing of the whole process will have to be re-thought. This is why it is so important to receive feedback from potential donors in the next two to three weeks, in order to determine more precisely the feasibility of the timing and sequence of decisions that have been described.

In the first week of February the Chairman of the Global Forum Steering Committee, Fernando Chaparro, also met with the President of IFAD, Fawzi Al-Sultan, to review with him the progress that has been made since the Global Forum on Agricultural Research that took place in Washington in October of 1996, under the chairmanship of the latter. One of the main aspects that came up in this meeting was the importance of end-user involvement, and of the strengthening of NARS and of community-level groups (NGOs), as a way of increasing the development-impact, and thus the effectiveness, of agricultural research. The role of the GFAR in facilitating this process through the more active involvement of all stakeholders involved, as well as the role of IFAD in the development of the Global Forum, were also discussed. Fawzi Al-Sultan reiterated the interest of IFAD in continuing to support the implementation process of the GFAR, and in playing a leading role as Chairman of the GFAR Support Group.