Global Forum on Agricultural Research

MINUTES OF THE 2nd NARS STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

October 26, 1997 - 08:00 - 10:30 Four Seasons Hotel, Washington D.C.

The meeting was opened by Fernando Chaparro, Chairman of the NARS Steering Committee (NARS-SC) as well as of the Global Forum Steering Committee (GF-SC) who welcomed all participants to the meeting.

In his introductory speech, Fernando mentioned that this second meeting was organized as an open meeting to which were invited not only the Chairpersons of the 5 Regional Fora but also the Chairpersons or Executive Secretaries of the sub-regional associations or organizations, the regional representatives to the CGIAR and the representatives of the Facilitating Agencies. 24 persons attended this meeting. He indicated that this policy on attendance could be revised if the official members of the Steering Committee (the 5 Chairpersons of the Regional Fora) wish to do so and would prefer to work in closed sessions. Fernando also mentioned the four documents which were distributed for discussion during the meeting:

- Operationalization of the NARS-GSC Secretariat
- Establishment of a “Donor Support Group to the GFAR” (discussion paper)

The proposed agenda was approved without modification.

1. GFAR Report of Activities

The Chairman justified the preparation of a document more comprehensive than a normal report of activities, since there was a need to have in a single document a clear presentation of the origin and of the process which led to the establishment of the GFAR. This initiative was highly appreciated by the participants.

During the discussion, the following points were raised:

- The importance of looking at the institutional changes which are taking place at the national level to build the NARS and the fact that the CGIAR is simply adapting its mode of operations to better address these changes;
- The necessity for the regional fora not only to support conservation and dissemination of knowledge but also to help in the development of new knowledge;
- FARA was not present in the Cairo meeting but fully endorsed the conclusions and recommendations formulated. For FARA, one of the priorities is to find better ways and means to optimize the NARS - IARC relationships;
Over the last 12 months, much progress has been made. It is now important to translate the terms of reference of the NARS-SC Secretariat into a specific programme of work, different but complementary from the GF-SC programme of work.

2. **Presentation by the different Regional Fora**

2.1. **APAARI (Asia and Pacific)**

Willy Dar, on behalf of the Chairperson of APAARI, made a brief presentation on the origin and current status of APAARI, emphasizing the fact that most of the activities are financially supported by the member contributions. APAARI’s main recent activities have been: support to different research networks; documentation and publication of success stories; priority-setting exercises for the main commodities (beyond those worked by the CGIAR); and regular publication of a newsletter. The 3 year work programme presented last year is being implemented and APAARI recognizes the need to have a full time secretariat to assist in its implementation.

2.2. **AARINENA (West Asia and North Africa)**

Mohamed El Mourid, INRA Morocco, on behalf of Dr. A. Arifi, President of AARINENA, summarized the results of the last AARINENA Executive Committee which took place earlier this month in Cyprus. His presentation was complemented by Abdelmajid Slama from IFAD who attended the meeting. The main results were: a modification of the constitution to allow the association to welcome new countries, especially those from Central Asia; the preparation of collaborative sub-regional research projects; the preparation of the transfer of the secretariat from FAO/RNE to Cyprus.

2.3. **FARA (Sub-Saharan Africa)**

Moïse Houssou, acting Chairman of CORAF and FARA, indicated that FARA was only recently formally established (February 1997) and mentioned the difficulties faced in the leadership of the association due to the war situation in Congo. The main activities at the regional level have been: strategic planning at the sub-regional level; strengthening the collaboration between NARS and ARIs; integration or building NARS in the different countries. In his presentation, Moïse re-emphasized the concept behind the establishment of FARA: priority is given to the sub-regional associations, FARA playing only a role of forum. This is why FARA has no secretariat as such, this function, as well as the Presidency, being taking on a 2 yearly rotational basis by one of the three sub-regional associations. Finally, he mentioned the important past and future role of SPAAR to which the FARA Plan of Action and budget has recently been submitted.

2.4. **CEE & CAC (Central and Eastern Europe - Central Asia and the Caucasus)**

Fernando Chaparro indicated that this region represented an important challenge for the NARS-SC as no mechanisms are yet in place in these two regions to bring them on board. Further discussions should take place during ICW with the regional representative for Central and Eastern Europe.
2.5. **LAC (Latin America and Carribbeans)**

Fernando Chaparro briefly presented the situation for the LAC region. During the first meeting of the LAC Regional Forum a document was prepared on its vision of the CGIAR priorities; this document was submitted to TAC in April 1996. In addition to the activities undertaken by the sub-regional associations/organizations (4 PROCIs and SICTA), the main actions taken at the regional level are: establishment of a regional fund for agricultural research and development (final decision expected in March 1998); establishment of a strategic plan for the regional fund (on-going consultation to get it approved by the individual countries); decision by the Ministers of Agriculture to ask IICA to provide the secretariat for the LAC Regional forum and to improve information exchange and communication between countries through the establishment of an agricultural information system by IICA.

3. **NARS-SC Secretariat**

The document presented at the meeting is based on a draft prepared jointly by FAO, IFAD and ISNAR in July 1997. In September 1997 this draft was carefully revised and amended during an informal NARS-SC meeting which took place in Montpellier, and took into consideration the agreement reached by FAO, IFAD and ISNAR on their respective roles, considering their respective advantages. The document was fully endorsed by the participants with some suggestions to improve its clarity and its consistency with the other documents. Subject to these changes, it was agreed that the final version will be distributed during the GF-SC meeting.

The Chairperson of FARA emphasized the need to get some guarantees on the financial support for the NARS-SC Secretariat before deciding on its official establishment. In his reply, Abdelmajid Slama stated that he accepted the official request of the NARS-SC for IFAD to initiate the establishment of the Donor Support Group (DSG). Accordingly IFAD will approach different donors before the GF-SC meeting so that a firmer answer can be given to this question. However, considering the support received from UNDP during the meeting and other earlier contacts, he strongly believed that the DSG should be established soon and funds made available. The NARS-SC thanked IFAD for accepting this responsibility.

During the discussions, it also appeared that there was a need to revise the terminology used, to make a list of the different acronyms and to design an organigram which will facilitate the understanding of the relationships between the different bodies. The need to move quickly to have a NARS-SC Secretariat operational was also stressed by the participants. Finally, it was decided that it will be important to split the proposed programme of work to indicate the respective responsibilities of the two steering committees and secretariats.

In order to revise the documents before distribution to the GF-SC meeting and to prepare additional ones requested by the participants, the Chairman suggested the establishment of a small working group which should report to the GF-SC meeting. The proposed members of
the working group were: F. Chapparo, M. Houssou, A. Slama, L. Fresco, C. Hoste and A. Derevier. This was endorsed by the participants.

4. **Background to two topics that will be discussed in the GF-SC**

This item of the agenda on the two papers dealing with the proposed programme of work and the DSG was skipped as the discussion had already taken place under item 3.

5. **Project presented by the NARS-SC and the NGO-SC**

The Chairman briefly presented the proposed joint NGO - NARS project. He indicated that in the coming 2-3 months a full proposal will be circulated to all regional representatives to seek their interest in participating and, if positive, to identify concrete case studies for the different regions. The importance of inter-country and not only inter-region comparisons was emphasized during the discussion.

6. **Mode of operation of the NARS-SC**

The Chairman suggested to keep the consultation between all interested bodies open till the GF-SC meeting. It will then be decided whether or not there is a need to change the current mode of operation, to confirm who are the members of the SC and the observers (if any) and the need for the SC to meet in closed sessions. This was endorsed by the participants.

7. **Report on the meeting with the CGIAR Regional Representatives**

The meeting between the NARS-SC and the CGIAR Regional Representatives could not take place before this meeting. The Chairman suggested to continue, for the time being, to invite the Regional Representatives to the deliberations of the NARS-SC.

8. **Other topics**

Manuel Lantin, CGIAR Secretariat, reminded the participants of the on-going CG System review and indicated that the review panel would like to meet the NARS representatives on Wednesday 29 October. The Chairman indicated that this was a very important invitation and that the NARS representatives should do the maximum to attend. The idea of preparing a common NARS position to be presented by the NARS-SC was mentioned and accepted.

The meeting was closed at 10:30 by the Chairman who thanked all participants for their attendance, their active participation and their constructive comments.