18th Steering Committee Meeting
Washington, USA
2nd – 3rd December 2006

Minutes of the 17th GFAR Steering Committee
17TH GFAR STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
SANA’A, YEMEN
JUNE 23-24, 2006

MINUTES

I. Welcome Remarks

The meeting was opened by Dr. Adel El-Beltagy the new Chair of the GFAR who was presiding over the Steering Committee for the first time since he took over from Dr Roozitalab the outgoing chair.

The chair recognized and introduced two observers to the meeting. Firstly, Dr Ismail Muharram, the Chairman of the Agricultural Research and Extension Authority (AREA) of Yemen, the Institution hosting the Steering Committee meeting. He requested Dr Muharram to convey greetings and gratitude to the Government of Yemen for hosting the meeting and for the hospitality extended to SC members Secondly, Mrs. Sushma Nath, Additional Secretary, Department of Agricultural Research (DARE), India, who attended the meeting on behalf of DARE the host institution for GFAR 2006 general conference in order to provide an update on preparatory activities for the conference and requested her to convey the committee’s gratitude to the Government of India for the organizational and financial support provided for the GFAR 2006 conference.

In welcoming members of the committee and observers to the meeting, the chair asked for the indulgence of participants to allow him to remind everyone of the mission of GFAR which is built on the concept of partnership among several stakeholders. He then described some of the challenges facing global Agricultural Research for Development (ARD,) especially with regards to the environment and climate change. He indicated that the recently concluded Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is a wake up call that all is not well with the way we are currently using our natural resources and managing our environment. He highlighted the need to reverse the situation by taking a number of measures which can only be successful if designed and implemented in a collaborative manner that involves several stakeholders, as advocated by GFAR in its mission statement and its modus operandi which involves its seven groups of stakeholders. According to the chair, the National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS) constitute and important element as the building blocks of this alliance of stakeholders, which must ensure that they adopt the GFAR’ s approach to partnerships among stakeholders in all they do.

He lamented the fact that most of the NARS are weak, and can not therefore address their ARD mandate effectively. He suggested that one of the reasons for this is a decreasing political will to support ARD at the national and global level, and saw an opportunity for GFAR to play an
advocacy role to improve this situation. In this regard he informed participants of an idea to launch an advocacy campaign which might start with a Lucerne type initiative that will be focused on stimulating increased political and funding support to strengthen NARS. Preliminary discussion on how to go about this and kick start it early in 2008 is on-going between FAO and GFAR who together will lead the initiative, and other institutions.

In concluding these welcome remarks, he thanked all members of the Steering Committee (SC) and other stakeholders for the vote of confidence placed in him by selecting him as the Chair of GFAR. He then invited Dr Ismail Muharram to make some opening statements. Dr Muharram extended a warm welcome to all participants, indicating that it was a pleasure for him to host the meeting, and invited them to take some time to visit and enjoy Yemen. He wished SC fruitful deliberations and outcomes.

2. Adoption of Agenda for the 17th Steering Committee Meeting

The draft agenda was adopted unanimously without amendments.

3. Approval of minutes of the 16th Steering Committee Meeting

The chair took members through the minutes which were approved after a proposal from Emil Frison seconded by Raj Paroda.

4. Action points report from the previous meeting

GFAR Executive Secretary Ola Smith presented actions taken following a number of outputs of discussion during the 16th GFAR SC meeting held in 3-4 December 2005.

4.1 Programme Committee composition. Emile Frison (IPGRI) requested that the composition and terms of reference of the programme committee be re-examined during the meeting. He indicated that the current terms of reference were the same as that of the previous NARS sub-committee with one or two additional tasks, and that the IARCS were not represented in the new committee.

4.2 Implementation of programme of work APAARI Executive Secretary Raj Paroda congratulated the Executive Secretary on the follow up activities reported and the work done during the year. He raised a number of issues he thought needed to be addressed. First was the high level of implementation of ICT related activities compared to some other activities such as support to CACAARI and the development of a GPP on biotechnology. He thought there should be a better balance between the various activities. He also suggested that the development of a GPP on biotechnology identified as an important issue since Dresden should not be referred to the PC but developed by the Secretariat. He requested that support to CACAARI which came under the general theme of strengthening RF needed to be given some priority the same way that such other stakeholders as farmers and NGOs are being supported, and that the rate of fund disbursement to RF to carryout activities should be increased as it is currently rather slow.

Alessandro Meschinelli (IFAD) supported the idea of ensuring a balance and value-added of various activities supported by GFAR. In his view, those activities that relate to the concept of inclusiveness – working with farmers and NGOs should be up front. He suggested that GFAR stakeholders should increasingly ask what they can do for GFAR and not only what GFAR can do
for them. Jack Wilkinson (IFAP) suggested that GFAR should assist in mobilizing resources at the time it is needed. It should look at practical ways to do business. He also challenged the GFAR Secretariat to push its stakeholders to deliver and make sure that things are being done and that deadlines are met. He added that GFAR should start thinking of how best the private sector can be engaged in the process and underscored the need for a communication strategy so we can communicate outside of GFAR circles.

The Executive Secretary (E.S.) responded to some of the issues raised, pointing out that the apparent slow rate of funds disbursement to RF was because some level of paper work needed to be done to secure approval for fund release, including the preparation of a concept note by the RF in order to provide essential information on what will be done, by whom, how and an appropriate budget. The preparation of such concept notes sometimes took some time.

With regards to the development of a GPP on Biotechnology, he was of the opinion that this could not and should not be done by the Secretariat but by the stakeholders who should follow the recently formulated guidelines for developing GPPs. The secretariat could only play a supporting and facilitating role. He agreed that support to RF is essential and is being done. The CACAARI case being a special one because of the relatively high level of support needed to get it going, and that an appropriate strategy the Secretariat plans to take is to support the development of a strategic plan and multi-year programme of work that will attract donor support.

5. **Report on Stewardship from out-going chairs**

Due to unavoidable personal circumstances, Dr. Roozitalab could not present the report on his stewardship as out-going Chairman of GFAR.

6. **Update on the 2nd GFAR External Review**

After a short introduction of this item by Rupert Best who introduced the two reviewers - Julian Gonsalves and Dominique Honkonou. The reviewers gave a quick update where they were in the review process in terms of what had been done, what still needs to be done, the approach they were using, and reporting deadlines. In terms of the approach, they described a number of tools being used including: questionnaires, electronic discussion, face to face interactions with stakeholders and focus group meetings. They explained that the Sana’a meeting provided the opportunity to use two of such tools – face to face interactions and focus group discussion and it also gave them the opportunity to observe the Steering Committee in action. It was then suggested that members be constituted into two working groups to discuss and respond to a set of questions. The first group tackled issues related to GFAR’s mission and role, its Business Plan (revisiting the four pillars and new ideas for the next BP) and the GFAR Secretariat (functioning and the performance of the Secretariat, with emphasis on roles, resources and staffing. The second group focused on issues related to GFAR governance and management, regional fora and funding. A number of issues were raised and discussed in plenary before going into the working groups. First issue was on the continued relevance of the mission statement. The consensus was that the mission statement remains relevant and valid. The second issue still revolved around the mission in terms of how to effectively mobilize stakeholders and ensure that this mobilization is rewarded by the global system. Stakeholder mobilization would involve changing attitudes, strengthening linkages and reducing barriers. Fundamental questions raised were how to effectively mobilize stakeholders; can this be done through programmes and activities and within
what time frame; what has been achieved to date, and what still needs to be done; and what time
frame would be appropriate to evaluate GFAR’s performance in this regard.

Salient issues in feedback from working groups.

6.1 Group 1

Mission remains valid, but there is a need to examine possibility of including the issue of synergy
among stakeholders because facilitating synergies and developing new ways of interaction are
unique niche and value added of GFAR. Toward this end, the following revision to GFAR
mission statement was proposed:

*To mobilize the stakeholders in agricultural research for development and promote
synergy in their efforts to alleviate poverty, increase food security, and promote the
sustainable use of natural resources.*

The group suggested that GFAR’s main roles could be three-fold: (1) Advocacy role; (2)
Facilitation role (ensuring horizontal and vertical exchange of information and experience); and
(3) Monitoring role (as custodian of principles, ensuring a multi-stakeholders approach, etc.)

The Business Plan.

Current four pillars remain relevant but there is a need to clarify the definition of “Collaborative
Research Partnership.” Consider merging the partnership and “Inter-regional collaboration”
pillars into one should be integrated. Serious thought should go into the nature of the BP for the
next triennium: should we develop an ambitious one that will require lobbying for an
appropriately bigger budget, or a modest and practical one based on a realistically achievable
level of resources.

GFAR Secretariat.

Critically examine the issue of core funding at an adequate level, to free it from relying on project
funds which may not be sustainable. Examine and recommend a critical mass of staff with the
right mix of expertise and experience.

6.2 Group 2

Mobilization of stakeholders.

Some success achieved so far, but much more needs to be done. Future efforts need to be directed
perhaps on two fronts: i) Quality horizontal interaction, collective visioning of ARD among
GFAR stakeholders and ii) proactive encouragement that ARD must deliver on MDG,
particularly on contributing towards making positive change in farmers’ livelihoods.

Forging linkages.

An important aspect of GFAR’s work that should be more proactively pursued with stakeholders
through the RF. There might be a need to be more strategic and make sure that multi-stakeholder
involvement is an explicit criterion for any GFAR-supported (financed) activity. GFAR should
seek for “culture” change where stakeholders fully understand what it means to be part of a
system.
**Governance.**

Existing governance structure is not that clear and encourages overlap of functions between various components: GFAR-SC, Management Team and the Programme Committee. Recommendations should be made to resolve this.

Glaring difference between the reality and practice with regards to some provisions in the Charter. This aspect needs to be carefully examined.

**Support to Regional Fora and linkages.**

Research priority setting, identification of and support to the development of inter-regional collaborative activities in such areas as biotechnology, linking farmers to markets and information and communication management were some of the areas recommended for GFAR to pursue in order to strengthen regional fora and promote strong linkages among them. It was suggested that GFAR should look out for opportunities for collaboration within regional fora. The example of a World Bank funded project ($60 million) to improve ARD in Senegal was a case in point. The group suggested that GFAR should examine ways and means of getting involved in such ventures if only to ensure its concept of partnership and some of its principles are used in the development and implementation of such activities.

**Donor support and commitment.**

The group observed that the enthusiasm and pledges made to support GFAR by donors during the GFAR 2000 meeting in Dresden, seemed to have waned over the years. It was suggested that efforts need to be made to identify the reasons for this. One of such reasons they suggested could be a less than adequate contribution of activities undertaken by GFAR to the realization of the mandate and goals of such donors. Another reason that was suggested was the apparent lack of coordination of donor support to GFAR, a situation that needs to be addressed, and it was suggested that the recently formulated Paris Declaration which is advocating a harmonization of donor support to development might be beneficial to GFAR. It was also suggested that the various members of GFAR could as the occasion presented itself wear the GFAR hat and play an advocacy role for GFAR.

6.3 Reviewer’s remarks:

The reviewers indicated that they were satisfied with the way the exercise was carried out, the level of participation and the outputs. They observed that the divergence of opinion they observed were not as wide as they thought they would obtain, and thanked all SC members for their contribution and promised to carefully examine all the issues raised.

**Action Points:**

Further information to be obtained on the “Paris Declaration” on harmonizing donor mechanisms and support to ARD.

The External Review report should be made available by 15 November 2006 and tabled for discussion during the December 2006 meeting of the SC.
7. **Global Partnership Program (GPP) Evaluation Report**

Julian Gonsalves, one of the two evaluators of the Global Partnership Programs, presented the GPP evaluation report which he said was on the whole, a positive one. He briefly described the salient points in the report including a revised definition of a GPP, guidelines for GPP development, approval and process flow and some elements of a GPP Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system. The latter, he indicated would need to be further improved.

In the ensuing discussions, the importance of documenting the process of partnership building was highlighted by members. The introduction of a “formal” approval process was, however, deemed by some members to be another layer and an added transaction cost to an otherwise flexible GPP development process. Another concern raised was that the GPPs, once they become independent, do not refer to GFAR anymore. It was mentioned that due recognition on the role played by GFAR in the development of GPPs should be ensured. Another observation was that there is lack of involvement of other stakeholders not associated with GFAR and that linkage with CGIAR priority setting process in identifying GPP themes is wanting. This last point was proposed by the GFAR Chair to be tackled in the GFAR External Review. In his intervention, the Chairman suggested that GFAR should monitor the learning process of partnership building as GPPs evolve. The question of next steps with regards to the report was raised and briefly discussed, with the following conclusions: the report and comments made by the Secretariat on the report should be sent again to SC members who should make comments they deemed necessary and provide a feedback to the Secretariat by the end of July 2006. The Management Team should then re-examine the report in light of comments received as well as the comments from the Secretariat and make appropriate recommendations to the SC which will make final decisions during the December 2006 meeting.

**Action points:**

The GPP Evaluation Report and comments from the Secretariat to be sent to SC members for their comments. Such comments to be sent to the Secretariat by July 31.

Management Team to examine the various documents and SC comments and make recommendation to the SC.

SC to take final decision on the report during the December 2006 meeting.

8. **Evaluation procedure for the Executive Secretary**

The Executive Secretary Ola Smith indicated that the Ad-Hoc committee charged with developing a procedure for the evaluation of the Executive Secretary had drafted a document which was circulated to members of the SC for comments. The convener of the Ad-Hoc committee Bryan Harvey, who was unable to attend the current meeting, received only a couple of comments and had not yet finalized a draft to be submitted to the SC. The Management Team was mandated to examine the draft and make recommendations to the SC for a final decision during the December 2006 meeting.

**Action point:** Evaluation procedure for the Executive Secretary to be finalized by the GFAR Management Team and placed for approval at the next Steering Committee Meeting to be held in Washington in December 2006.
9. **Appointment of the Next Executive Secretary (ES)**

The Executive Secretary Ola Smith made a short presentation on the progress made thus far for the recruitment of a new Executive Secretary. Salient points in the presentation were:

- Vacancy Announcement with a closing date of June 28 2006 posted on FAO vacancy site and on EGFAR. Also sent to various partners for posting on their sites, including all RF, CG Centres, GPPs, DURAS Project and AGROPOLIS.
- Request for the SC to take a decision on the composition of the Selection Committee from the list suggested.
- Suggestion of next steps and a timeline which ended with a final selection and appointment by early October 2006.

The SC discussed the various issues related to the selection of the Executive Secretary, including the possibility of delaying the process to benefit from the on-going GFAR review process. The following decisions were then taken:

a) Selection Committee composition approved as follows: Adel El-Beltagy (chair), Rodney Cooke, Parvis Koohafkan, Monty Jones, David King and Barbara Becker. The latter indicated that she would not able to devote the time required for the exercise. The Secretariat was then requested to contact either Marina Puccioni or Ruth Haug to join the committee.

b) All applications received should be sent to the secretariat set up at IFAD for the purpose of managing the recruitment process.

c) Selection committee given full delegation of power and authorization to carryout and conclude the process which should result in the recommendation of a prioritized list of up to 3 and preferably 2 candidates to the FAO DG.

d) Selection committee to develop an appropriate process and selection criteria.

e) Selection committee to continue the selection process as recommended in the timeline.

**Action point:** Executive Secretary selection process to continue and be finalized as decided.

10. **Statutory rotation of Steering Committee members**

The item was introduced by the Executive Secretary who reminded SC members of a number of provisions in the Charter with regards to the tenure of members of the SC. One of such provisions is that “Each member of the committee will serve for a period of three years, renewable once for another three years, to coincide with the GFAR General Conference, for a total of six years, except for the southern RF chairs, who will serve on the committee for the period of their mandate as RF chair”. He then suggested that in order to abide by this provision of rotation to coincide with the GFAR General conference, the following stakeholder groups should start the process of consultation within their groups in order to select members for the SC: the Northern regional forums (Europe and North America), the IARCs, NGOs, FOs, the private sector (substantive and alternate members) the Donor constituencies (alternate member), and to send such nominations to the Secretariat by the 29th of September 2006.
Several issues were raised and discussed following the presentation.

Raj Paroda (ES APAARI) sought clarification on the role of RF Executive Secretaries in GFAR SC. He indicated that as formulated in the current Charter, RF ES may not automatically be selected as alternate members to their chairs, because the wording in the charter is as follows: “the alternate will be a recognized leader of agricultural research or rural development”. In other words this does not guarantee that an Executive Secretary of a RF would be the alternate member to the chair of the RF. He suggested this needs to be changed, because the ES of RF should be alternate members providing guidance to the chairs who serve as substantive members. Following a short discussion of this issue, the Chair suggested that the Secretariat should examine the phrase and suggest an amendment that will ensure that ES of RF would serve as alternate to their chairs.

Barbara Becker (EFARD) questioned the rationale behind the distinction made between southern and northern fora with regards to the tenure of office. She also queried the wisdom of a three-year rotation of SC members tied to the GFAR Conference as this will pose some continuity problems. Views on this issues were quasi unanimous in the sense that there was agreement that the distinction made between southern and northern fora should be eliminated. Statutory rotation of SC members should not be linked to the General Conference, and some more innovative and staggered rotational rhythm that will not affect continuity and corporate memory should be formulated. The chair summarized the outcome of the discussion as follows:

- The relevant part of the Charter should be modified to ensure that ES of RF will serve as alternate members to the chair of RF who remain de facto substantive members
- Mandate of GFAR SC Members should remain at three years renewable once and not linked to the General Conference.
- The External Review Team should consider the issue of rotation of SC members and suggest a workable procedure that will guarantee some continuity

**Action point:**

GFAR External Reviewers to look at the implications of the proposed rotation in the GFAR Charter and provide recommendations accordingly.

The section of the Charter dealing with alternate members be re-examined and amended with an appropriate formulation that will ensure that RF Executive Secretaries are the alternate members. A group made up of the Chair, Raj Paroda and the Secretariat was given the task of making this amendment. The group met and recommended the following changes to the footnote under Steering Committee composition.

1 For the NARS representatives, the Chairperson of each Regional Forum becomes “de facto” the GFAR-SC member, unless otherwise specified by the Regional Forum. The alternate will be the Executive Secretary of the Regional Forum.

(The original text with regards to the alternate member was: the alternate will be a recognized leader of agricultural research or rural development)

11. GFAR Progress Report
A progress report covering the period January to May 2006 was presented by Rupert Best. Activities carried out and the outputs under each of the four business plan pillars as well as management issues were presented following brief descriptive highlights of major outputs which were:

- The new Chair of GFAR, Dr Adel El-Beltagy, assumed his responsibilities at the 15th Management Team Meeting on 1-2 June 2006.
- The Review of the Global Partnership Programme mechanism has been completed and the draft report is available. The Review Team confirmed the continuing relevance of the GPP mechanism and identified a series of actions to improve its functioning.
- The sub Saharan Africa NGO Consortium consolidated its institutional integrity by establishing a code of conduct, initiating the process for developing an NGO database and for undertaking case studies to characterize proven technologies for scaling out, and the development of a communications strategy.
- Significant progress has been made in the re-engineering EGFAR to improve its versatility and functionality for users.
- The programme for GFAR 2006 Conference has been finalized, logistical arrangements are well advanced and financial resources have been allocated or pledged by a number of GFAR’s donors.

The ensuing discussion touched on the following main issues.

- The need to present not only activities carried but also some elements of the level or an indication of expected outputs achieved.
- The need, in future reports to highlight some activities carried out by RF and results achieved as well.
- Process of building capacity of farmers groups seems to be moving along since some level of participation is now discernible. Next crucial step would be to monitor real participation by setting up and using some Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mechanism. Embedded in the M&E process would be a quantification of the time it takes to go through the consultative process and arrive at the concrete doing things phase. The example of the Linking Farmers to market initiative was cited by Jack Wilkins who recommended that some means of fast tracking these processes and events should be implemented so as not to discourage otherwise willing participants.
- With regards to ensuring CSO participation and engagement in GFAR activities, Executive Secretaries gave examples of activities being carried out in their respective regions to address this issue and reported encouraging progress, including the now functional Sub-Saharan NGO consortium, recent efforts in APAARI to initiate a similar NGO consortium in the region, and various attempts in AARINENA to involve CSO in various activities. Nevertheless, some problems of prompt responses from CSO partners especially farmers belonging to the IFAP group was flagged. It was also suggested that it might be necessary to strengthen support to RF to ensure that the necessary collaboration takes place on a regular basis. In this regard, Raj Paroda suggested a two prong approach: the GFAR Secretariat should strengthen its support to the Regional Fora; and IFAP to support its regional representatives invited to participate in RF activities.
It was suggested by Raj Paroda that efforts should be made to launch the pipe-lined GPPs (NTFP and LFM) this year. He also suggested that the Secretariat should develop a GPP on Biotechnology since this area of investigation was identified as an important area way back in 2000 during the Dresden meeting. He indicated that APAARI was ready to share experience and knowledge in this area with other regions, but that the Secretariat should develop a formal GPP on Biotechnology under the Inter-regional Collaboration pillar.

Mobilization of resources for the implementation of pipelined GPP was also briefly discussed as this constitutes an important issue for the successful development and implementation of GPPs. A number of suggestions were made as to how this issue could be tackled. One was to tap in on on-going well funded initiatives such as the IFAD initiative on linking farmers to market in pro-poor crops, or and other IFAD commodity chains, initiative to which GFAR could and should be linked to benefit from available resources.

Responses and explanation were provided by the Secretariat to some of the issues raised especially with regards to:

a) Fast tracking the development of GPPs and other initiatives. The Secretariat promised to continue making efforts to speed up the development of these multi-stakeholder initiatives which often require consultation and complicated negotiations among the various stakeholders.

b) Monitoring and evaluating partnership activities. It was agreed and reiterated that this is an important aspect of the multi-stakeholder approach to ARD. It was indicated that evaluating the quality of partnership of multi-stakeholder activities is an area the secretariat plans to work on and has submitted a proposal to IFAD to learn lessons and develop robust monitoring tools capable of evaluating the quality of such activities. Unfortunately, the proposal has not yet been approved.

c) Tapping in on well funded initiatives. It was pointed out that while this approach may look attractive it is often difficult to benefit from such bi-laterally negotiated activities, except if the participation started at the onset of the negotiations. Even then it would be an uphill task to convince national governments to involve GFAR in such negotiations.

d) Developing a GPP on Biotechnology. The Secretariat pointed out that it would be rather difficult for it to develop such a GPP or any other one for that matter, given that these are supposed to be stakeholder led initiatives. Emil Frison reinforced this view indicating that the onus of developing and funding GPPs should not be put on the Secretariat which can only play a facilitating role to allow it put more emphasis on its advocacy role. Barbara Becker suggested that perhaps the Secretariat should provide seed money to allow the GPPs get off the ground, an approach the Secretariat agreed with, pointing out that this is now an important part of the GPP development and approval process recently suggested by the GPP review.

Action points: (1) GFAR Secretariat to revisit the proposal on partnership for re-submission to IFAD and other possible donors.

12. GFAR Financial Update
The financial update presented by the Executive Secretary covered the period of January to May 2006, and showed the budget approved during the December 2005 SC meeting, contributions received and expected from various donors; expenditure during the period covered and project expenditure to the end of the year.

The presentation was discussed and a number of comments and recommendations were made. The GFAR Chair thought that the budget is rather modest given the enormous coordination and facilitation role of the Secretariat. This view was echoed by Alessandro Meschinelli (IFAD) who pointed out that a critical examination of the contributions showed a large variation with some contribution as low as $50 to 60,000 a year to one or two others some going over the hundred thousand mark. He also did not think the Secretariat was receiving adequate financial support. He took the opportunity to explain that recent changes in the administration of the grant portfolio within IFAD now means that GFAR can only be funded through a competitive multi-year project funding mechanism, which may not be the most suitable from a GFAR standpoint. Still on the donor contribution issue, it was pointed out that hitherto the European Commission did not have a funding mechanism for GFAR like type initiatives, but that it recently developed a Global Public Funds mechanism through which GFAR the CG and RF could access funds for ARD initiatives. It was also suggested that extra efforts be made to FAO to increase its support to GFAR. In this regard, the Chair suggested that the planned FAO-GFAR day designed to sensitize FAO management could be expanded to cover other Rome-based agencies (IFAD, WFP and IPGRI)

Some other comments revolved around the presentation of the report and a number of suggestions were made for future improvement such as: presenting pledges as pledges and not as income; separate restricted from un-restricted funds; provide further details related to carry over funds whether they are reserves or committed to certain activities; GFAR management costs should go under operations, while at the same time the proportion of budget devoted to operations should be lower than the current 50%; It was also suggested that a 3-4 years projected funding support that provides the GFAR Secretariat with core funding to meet its fixed costs be envisaged…

A cluster of comments addressed the perceived slow rate of fund disbursement to RF due in part to documentation required to be provided by the RF to access funds and also because in line with FAO regulations, the Secretariat is unable to provide all of the required funds for an activity up front as these have to be provided in several installments. This sometimes means that the RF has to pre-finance some of these activities. The GFAR chair suggested that perhaps the possibility of channeling GFAR funds through more flexible mechanisms such as through ICARDA should be explored.

**Action points:** (1) GFAR Secretariat to revisit the budget and financial reporting format to reflect the points raised by SC members for future reports.

### 13. Update on the Third GFAR Triennial Conference

Ajit Maru presented a comprehensive update on preparation for the GFAR 2006 General Conference. The update included the draft conference programme, conference venues, associated events, some elements of local required logistical support and a draft budget.

Following this presentation, Mrs. Sushma Nath representing the host preparatory committee confirmed on-going local preparatory activities, and that the President of India has confirmed he
will preside over the opening session. She indicated that improving rural employment and enhancing farm income was a major concern for all, and suggested that the conference may want to deal with this issue.

Discussion centered mainly on the programme with a number of suggestions made to improve and complete it. Members also wanted to include GFAR’s position on each of the issue being discussed at the Conference. Barbara Becker felt that the content was rather strongly focused on the MDGs, whose horizon will soon be reached, while the research horizon needed to be a much longer horizon of 10-15 years. Emile Frison suggested inclusion of discussions on biodiversity and public health, while Alessandro Meschinelli pointed out the lack of a youth dimension. It was also suggested that in compiling the list of speakers, chairs etc. efforts should be made to achieve a north-south and gender balance. Each member then briefly indicated in what way its constituency would contribute to the conference, and these range from serving as chairs, rapporteurs, participating in the exhibition and display sessions to holding special side events.

The Chairperson suggested that the Conference Working Group had done its work commendably and while accepting most of its suggestions, the Steering Committee will now finalize the program. The Secretariat was asked to incorporate the various suggestions of the Steering Committee and finalize the program and send a request to SC to make suggestions for speakers for the various sub-thematic and topical issues.

**Action points:**

i) GFAR Secretariat to send out the draft programme showing where nominations for chairs, speakers, rapporteurs etc are still needed to SC members for their inputs and suggestions then finalize the conference programme.

ii) A small group should be set up to prepare a Delhi Declaration patterned on the Dresden Declaration.

**Worthy of note:**

Dr Samvel Avetisyan, the Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Armenia who represented CAAARI presented a medal and a certificate of recognition from the Minister of Agriculture of Armenia, to the GFAR chair, Professor Adel El-Beltagy, for his many contributions to agricultural development. The Chair accepted this honour and highest level of recognition, and requested Dr Avetisyan to transmit his appreciation to the Government of Armenia and all the Research Institutions he had the pleasure of working with.

14. **Programme Committee Composition**

The Executive Secretary presented a short report on efforts made to date to constitute a Programme Committee as stipulated in the Charter. He reminded the SC members of the relevant item in the Charter which states that:

“The Programme Committee (PC) is composed of two representatives from each of the five southern RF and one representative from each of the northern fora. One of the representatives from the southern fora should be the Executive Secretary of the fora, and the other from a stakeholder group other than that of the Executive Secretary, with at least one from each of the non-research groups (NGOs, farmers’ organizations and the private sector), for a total number of 12 members”.

14
He then presented a table showing members of the PC as nominated by the various stakeholder groups. Complete nominations had not been received from all RF at that time: AARINENA (Ibrahim Hamdan and Abu-Shriha Nabeel) APAARI (Raj Paroda) CACAARI (Samvel Avetisyan) FARA (Monty Jones and Ms. Sylvie Christel Mbog) FORAGRO (Enrique Alarcon) EFARD (Barbara Becker) NAFAR (Brian Harvey).

Issues were raised with regards to the unbalanced representation on the PC especially the exclusion of the IARCS. It was also suggested that the Terms of Reference of the committee needed to be reviewed and improved upon. This discussion trend suggested that the provision in the Charter with regards to this committee needed to be revised.

The decision taken was therefore that the part the provisions of the GFAR Charter regarding the Terms of Reference (TOR) and composition of the Program Committee should be reviewed and that the External Reviewers could examine this aspect. It was also decided that the PC should not meet as planned in September, and when it meets in December, the IARCS representative should participate.

**Action points:**

GFAR External Reviewers to analyze the situation and provide recommendations accordingly.

**15. Suggested Process for developing the next GFAR Business Plan**

A short presentation on a process for developing the next GFAR Business Plan for 2008-2010 was discussed and approved.

**16. Any Other Business**

The Chairman returned to the issue of the unavoidable absence of the former chair, Dr Mohammad Roozitalab who had prepared a farewell speech on collective achievements. The copies of the presentation will be sent to members. He expressed the appreciation of GFAR for the leadership Dr Roozitalab provided during his tenure as chair, and wanted this to be placed on record. He indicated that a plaque recognizing this achievement will be sent to Dr Roozitalab through the Iranian representative attending the AARINENA meeting in Sana’a.

Under this item the Chair informed members of his recent visit to the DG of FAO, during which the idea of organizing another Lucerne type Initiative was discussed and the decision taken that GFAR and FAO with other partners should organize and implement this activity which should focus on providing support to NARS as opposed to the initial Lucerne initiative which was focused on strengthening the CGIAR. He indicated that the plan is to invite several Donors and Ministers of Agriculture, Planning and Finance to the meeting which should take place late in 2007 or early 2008 and that an interest group will be formed to plan for and move the initiative forward.

The consensus was that this is a good initiative, and was endorsed to be pursued. It was also suggested that efforts should be made to ensure adequate participation of users of research information and knowledge including farmers and the extension services. Barbara Becker suggested that the event should be planned for early 2008 rather than late 2007 because of a plan.
to host another big international event in September 2007 in Switzerland. Commenting on the suggestion that farmers be involved in this activity, the Chair raised the issue of whether the term farmers within the IFAP context includes forest and fisher folks. The IFAP President indicated that IFAP group does not include the two sectors which are not represented in IFAP. The general trend of the discussion on this issue was that efforts need to be made to broaden out and include these two sectors within the IFAP group on the one hand and also to ensure that they become more active within GFAR on the other hand. It was suggested that these needs to be reflected in the development of the next business plan.

The FARA chair reminded members of the SC of a forthcoming FARA General Assembly scheduled for June 2007 and which has been advertised. She invited SC members and their constituencies to plan to actively participate.

17. Concluding Remarks

In his closing remarks, the Chairman thanked all members of the committee for the active participation and contribution to the many issues discussed. He reiterated his earlier gratitude to the SC for their confidence and trust. He also thanked the GFAR external reviewers for the effort they made to interact with members of the SC, and the Secretariat for organizing the meeting. His final expression of gratitude was for Dr Ismail Muharram the Chairman of Agricultural Research and Extension Authority (AREA) of Yemen, Dr Mohammed Sallam the Director of External Programme AREA and several other colleagues of AREA who helped in many ways to ensure that the SC meeting was successfully held. Finally he thanked the Government of Yemen for the permission to hold the meeting in Sana’a, and for the hospitality extended to all the meeting participants.

The meeting was then adjourned.
### List of participants

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