1. The presence of members attending the Steering Committee meeting is documented in Annexure 1
2. The approved agenda of the meeting is attached in Annexure 2
3. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Adel El-Beltagy, GFAR Chair

1. Welcome Remarks

The meeting was opened by GFAR Chair. The President of Agricultural Research Centre (ARC), Ministry of Agriculture, Egypt, Dr. Hania El-Atraby was also present as Chief Guest. The Chair, GFAR, welcomed Steering Committee (SC) members to the meeting at Cairo and wished them fruitful deliberations. He indicated that GFAR at this Steering Committee meeting had to discuss the way forward and gain more momentum. GFAR has to make a difference to the vast numbers of this planet’s population that depends on agriculture. GFAR has to increase global and inter-regional collaboration among all GFAR stakeholders including the International Agricultural Research Centres, farmers groups and the private sector. It must have a clear, well focussed future direction. For example, in discussing climate change, it must look at GFAR’s niche, that is how climate change will affect smallholders and rural livelihoods, how to develop the necessary skills to manage anticipated threats and how to move forward in adapting agriculture to this change. There must be a buy-in by all GFAR stakeholders to its ideals.

The President of ARC in her opening remarks indicated that Egypt has a very long history of agriculture starting from Pharonic times. The modern history of Egyptian agriculture has had significant contribution from agricultural research. She invited all members of the Steering Committee to visit the Agricultural Museum, especially the ancient Egyptian agricultural section of the museum and the Genetic Engineering Institute and learn more about agricultural research activities in Egypt.

2. Adoption of Agenda for the 19th Steering Committee Meeting

After his opening remarks, the Chair tabled the agenda for the Steering Committee Meeting for adoption or modifications. The agenda was modified to include a presentation by the GFAR Chair on the meeting he had recently attended.

3. Approval of minutes of the 18th Steering Committee Meeting

The minutes of the 18th Steering Committee Meeting were then tabled. The minutes were approved unanimously as tabled. However, members suggested that in future the minutes of the Programme Committee Meeting once approved by the Steering Committee should be annexed to the forthcoming minutes of the SC Meeting.
As regards the rotation of the Chair of the Donor Support Group, Mr. Shantanu Mathur informed that IFAD has no objection to step out from chairing the Donor Support Group meeting and apply a rotation policy for the Chairmanship of the DSG. Ms B. Becker reminded that such a decision has to be taken by the DSG itself.

**Action points:**

1. Program Committee Meeting Minutes in future to be annexed to the forthcoming minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
2. The Donor Support Group of GFAR to consider rotation of DSG Chair at its next meeting.

4. **Action Taken Report on the recommendation of the 18th Steering Committee Meeting**

The action taken report on the recommendation of the 18th Steering Committee Meeting was presented by Dr. Abdelmajid Slama, Executive Secretary a.i. The report is annexed as Appendix 3.

5. **Report of the GFAR Chair on Meetings Attended**

Dr. Adel El-Beltagy presented his report on the meetings he had attended to represent GFAR since the last Steering Committee which included the High level FAO-CGIAR Meeting, FAO High Level Panel on Millennium Development Goals and the CGIAR Executive Council Meeting held in May in Madrid. He also briefed on other meetings he attended, on invitation as Chair of Agricultural Research and Development Council, Egypt. These included the Bio Vision World Life Science Forum and the Global Crop Diversity Fund

i) High level FAO-CGIAR Meeting

In this meeting held in April, 2007 at Rome, examples of collaboration between FAO-CGIAR were discussed. The Research for Development Continuum was also discussed between FAO and CGIAR. The GFAR Chair raised the important issue of involving members of GFAR to enhance and deepen the linkages with FAO and CGIAR in order to impact meaningfully in the improvement of rural livelihoods.

ii) FAO High Level Panel on Millennium Development Goals

This meeting was held in May, 2007 at Rome. The agenda of the meeting dealt with how FAO with other UN Organizations can contribute to achieving MDGs especially the eradication of hunger and extreme poverty. The Director-General FAO, Mr. Jacques Diouff addressed the participants. The meeting was chaired by Dr. M.S. Swaminathan. The Chair, GFAR informed FAO that it should involve friends such as GFAR to enhance its capacity to contribute to reaching the MDGs. He also informed the participants on the outcome of the GFAR Triennial Conference held in November, 2006 which had the theme of Reorienting Agricultural Research to meet MDGs. Other issues dealt with by the FAO high level panel included the ongoing Independent External Evaluation of FAO and important new thrusts of FAO in meeting the MDGs.
At the meeting the study on effects of Supermarkets and Large Corporates on Small holder farmers and producers was presented. After a study of nearly 2 years there are indications, contrary to common belief, that there are benefits of supermarkets such as Wal-Mart to small farmers and producers. Some of the supermarkets allow these producers to market their products through the supermarkets. Some contribute to organizing small producers. The GFAR Chair offered findings from GFAR project on Linking Farmers to Markets to also contribute to this study. The Management of Trans-boundary Pests and Diseases was also discussed at the meeting. The GFAR Chair indicated that FAO should not treat the management of Trans-boundary Pests and Diseases as a emergency program. FAO should mainstream it. A presentation on FAO as Knowledge Organization was also made at the meeting. The GFAR Chair appreciated FAO efforts. He indicated the need to carefully verify and validate all information and knowledge from FAO. GFAR is already collaboration with FAO in the area of Information and Communications Management. GFAR is a member of the new Initiative on Scientific Information and Knowledge Sharing, collaborates in scientific information management and is leading the development of standards for MIS.

CGIAR Executive Committee Meeting

The Chair participated in the CGIAR Executive Committee Meeting held in May 2007 at Madrid.

The GFAR Chair felt that GFAR should involve more in CGIAR’s Challenge Programs, with CGIAR Alliance Executive and Chair and members of Boards of Governors of CGIAR International Agricultural Research Centers, the Science Council, activities in human resource development such as the CGIAR Senior Leadership Programs by nominating GFAR participants and activities at the System level such the CSOs Forum, ICT-KM Initiation and the Central Advisory Service for Intellectual Property Rights. At the EXCO, GFAR collaboration was also sought in Performance Assessment of the Centers.

Other Meetings Attended on Invitation as Chair of Agricultural Research and Development Council of Egypt

Bio-Vision World Life Science Forum

Dr. Adel el-Beltagy attended Biovision – World Life Science Forum – in March at Lyon as representative of Agricultural Research and Development Council, Egypt. A record number of world leaders in Science, Society and Industry, gathered at the science forum to debate the role and contribution of Life Sciences to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDSs). Four key drivers for change were identified:

- First, the need for truly integrated approaches to problem solving across the three domains (health, food and nutrition and the environment) were identified as critical to driving effective change because of increasing interdependency.
- Secondly, without deeper partnership and broader engagement among private and public sector players, scientists, NGOs, opinion leaders and members of industry change can not be generated.
- Third, it is important that political audiences whether they are at local, regional, national and international levels understand the problems and get involved.
- And lastly, adequate funding and long-term financing solutions must be put in place to fund programmes.

**ii) Global Crop Diversity Fund Meeting**

Dr. Adel El-Beltagy also attended the meeting of the Global Crop Diversity Fund in May 2007 at Rome as he is Board Member of the Trust representing the Agricultural Research and Development Council, Egypt.

Discussions following the Chairman, GFAR presentation on Meetings attended

Following this presentation there was a brief discussion regarding reports to be made to the GFAR Secretariat by all who had represented GFAR at various meetings. Dr. Raj Paroda indicated that relationship with CGIAR is very important and activities conducted to strengthen this relationship and in collaboration with the CGIAR should be a standing item for each Steering Committee Meeting. He also indicated that there were many activities that were initiated by GFAR and that they were later followed up by CGIAR such as the Global Partnership programs, the CSO and YPARD activities. Unfortunately after these activities picked up in strength the leading role of GFAR was not highlighted and put in the right perspective. As partners GFAR has to be more aggressive in bringing its perspective in CGIAR activities. Dr. Mario Allegri also reported on his attending the CGIAR Executive Council Meeting held last week in Madrid. He indicated that it is not easy to represent the GFAR constituency as he had only 3 weeks notice to attend the meeting and he could not therefore consult all regional forums. Dr. Adel el Beltagy also indicated that no one from GFAR had attended any Science Council Meeting in the past 3 years. Dr. Monty Jones indicated that the reports of meetings where GFAR had participated should also be shared with the regional forums. Dr. Bryan Harvey congratulated Dr. El-Beltagy on his report and stated that there was a window of opportunity due to change in CGIAR leadership for GFAR to now be proactive in its relationship with the CGIAR. Some of the activities in CGIAR were moving very fast. Dr. Papa Seck also congratulated the GFAR Chair for his presentation. He indicated that GFAR has to also make efforts to strengthen its linkages and voice with CGIAR. The CG was open for all possibilities. Dr. El-Beltagy indicated that there are opportunities to collaborate with CGIAR’s challenge programs especially those that have now been approved as ideas and are being made into programmes. Many of the CGIAR Centres Boards of Trustees now have private sector, farmer and CSO representatives. Dr. Slama also indicated some of the value addition GFAR provided to CGIAR. He also stated that there had been lost opportunities in the past. Dr. El-Beltagy also indicated that GFAR should play an important role in building greater linkages with regional financing institutions and regional forums for more investment in inter-regional collaboration. He also indicated that the World Bank will be reorganizing its Agriculture, Environment and Rural Development Sector. GFAR and its partners should engage and link with these activities in future.

His presentation is included as Appendix 4.

**Action Point:**

The Secretariat should follow up reporting by all who represent GFAR.

6. **GFAR Secretariat Activity Report for 2007**
The GFAR Secretariat Activity Report for January to May 2007 was made by Dr. Abdelmajid Slama Executive Secretary a.i.

Following the activity report there was a brief discussion on the lengthy administrative clearances regarding the approval of GFAR financial transactions issues. The GFAR Chair informed that the Management Committee in its meeting in January had discussed the issue of financial reporting as it was a matter of deep concern as regards donor relations. The solution was to hire a budget management assistant at the Secretariat with skills in accounting. Dr. Isabel Alvarez indicated that FAO dealt with many donors and multilateral projects. There was no difficulty in financial reporting to donors under those projects when a division has a budget manager among its staff. There was a suggestion by Dr. Paroda that GFAR should use the CGIAR System for most of its financial transactions as currently the financial support to regional forums was complicated with Letter of Agreements with stipulations of payment conditions as by FAO rules that are not relevant to GFAR as it has its independent governance structure

Dr. Slama indicated that with limited staffing, the Secretariat was hard pressed to follow up all the recommendations and suggestions made to the Secretariat. He stressed the need to strengthen GFAR Secretariat.

Dr. El-Beltagy indicated that the staffing of GFAR Secretariat will be further discussed as it is included as a separate agenda item for this meeting (See Paragraph 10).

7. Report of 2nd GFAR External Review - Discussion on Draft Response by the GFAR’s Management Team and Steering Committee

The response by GFAR’s Management Team and Steering Committee on the 2nd GFAR External Review was discussed. The draft version is included as Annexure 6. The final response after approval of the Steering Committee will be circulated to all GFAR Stakeholders.

8. Presentation, Discussion and approval of GFAR Business Plan

The GFAR Business Plan for 2007-2009 was presented by the Executive Secretary a.i.

As regards to the introductory paragraphs, the suggested changes will be incorporated in the revised version.

The main questions raised during the Steering Committee meeting covered;

A. The declining trend for core funding,
B. The need to diversify funding sources such as membership fee from GFAR stakeholders,
C. The need to address gender in the BP
D. The identification of the likely impact for the various projects included in the GFAR Business Plan
The Project wise comments on the business plan were as follows:

**Project 1:** This project was considered by Steering Committee Members as being relevant to GFAR at all levels of its constituents. There is a need to apply a bottom up approach for consensus building in the project. The consensus building should start from the regional level. There must be better clarification of GFAR niche role (shared research agenda on adaptation to climate change). There was a need to clarify the relationship with the potential CGIAR Challenge program on climate change (this project and the challenge program should be mutually supportive).

**Project 2:** It was considered by the members that it is a very relevant proposal. The dimension of communication for development however needed to be reflected. The first 2 activities under the key activities are already taking place for Africa by FARA. The documents are available and can be shared. There was a need to include the role of the private sector as also YPARD and Natura as collaborators in the project. The project must consider the interface between extension and innovation systems. It must also make a distinction between commercial and non-commercial agriculture. There was a need for the project to focus on the concept of retooling of agricultural research, education and extension.

**Project 3:** It was considered to be highly relevant with focus on small producers. It was necessary for the project to highlight the research perspective focusing on action research.

**Project 4:** The members felt that the role of GFAR should not be perceived as being involved in technology generation. The project has to be redirected to address the theme of management of water use efficiency at the farm level (agro-management techniques, supplementary irrigation…) . The new project title could be: Accelerated program for the transfer to farmers of available results and practices on management of water scarcity and water use efficiency at the farmer field level with focus on small producers (analysis of technologies and lessons learned).

**Project 5:** The project was considered very relevant by the members from the point of view of sharing and exchange of information from various sources for poor farmers for innovation. Some of the outputs indicated in the project had to be aligned to the descriptive text of the project.

**Project 6:** The formulation of the second phase of project was accepted by the members. They felt that it must be ensured that the ownership of GFAR is not lost during the second phase.

**Support Activities:** Need to include a budget for 3.2.1 (monitoring of on-going activities)

**Operating budget and source of funding:** The 2007 projected operating budget for the restricted new projects should include the need for initial funding. It was also agreed that all stakeholders and particularly the regional Fora and the CGIAR centres would provide a symbolic contribution to the core fund in the form of a membership fee.

9. **Mid Term Financial Report for 2007**

The mid-term financial report for 2007 was tabled by the Executive Secretary a.i. The members accepted the financial report.
10. **Staffing of GFAR Secretariat**

Staffing of the GFAR Secretariat was discussed by the members. The TORs of the Budget and Administration Assistant were reviewed and found satisfactory. The Executive Secretary a.i. described the current and future staffing of the GFAR Secretariat as per the Business Plan for 2007-2009. He indicated that core staffing was critical to future successful activities of GFAR. It was decided that the position of the Budget and Administration Assistant be filled as soon as possible.

**Action point:**

The Secretariat should make immediate action to fill the position of Budget and Administrative Assistant.

11. **Status of GFAR Secretariat in FAO structure**

As a response to the Second External Review of GFAR recommendation on elevating the status of GFAR Secretariat within FAO structure, the Steering Committee discussed the option of upgrading over time the current Executive Secretary post of D-1 to a D-2 within FAO following the model of Science council.

The SC endorsed the rational that this option will lead to an enhanced global image of GFAR and to the desired higher level of decision-making and autonomy within FAO. A D-2 position (Division Head) of the Executive Secretary will allow him/her to report directly to an Assistant Director-General within FAO and improve the performance of the Secretariat by reducing the current clearance steps by at a divisional level.

It was decided that this option would discussed further in early 2008 on the basis of an internal review of the efficiency of the present housing arrangement. For planning purposes the operating budget of the Business Plan will include provision for a D-2 level as of 2009. It is also recognized that the cost implication between a D-1 step 3 position and a D-2 step 1 position is minimal.

12. **Programme of Work and Budget for 2007 - Revised**

The revised Programme of Work and Budget for 2007 was tabled by the Executive Secretary a.i. The revised programme of work and budget were accepted by the members. The members wanted the budget to reflect funds for initial activities for the various projects detailed in the Business plan for 2007-2009.

13. **Update on the recruitment of the next executive secretary:**

The Chair of the SC informed that the second advertisement generated 73 applications. After screening the all the applications from both advertisement, IFAD proposed a long list of potential candidates. Out of the long list the selection committee retained a short list of 4 candidates to be interviewed on the 25-26 June in Rome.
While expressing their concerns about the long delay (that already affected the image of GFAR) in finding a suitable candidate, the SC members were keen on the need for having a high calibre candidate. In order to avoid further delay and move fast in the event that the results of the interviews of the 4 candidates is negative, the SC unanimously agreed on the 2 following parallel course of actions: a) consider a secondment from a donor for a period of 2 to 3 years; and b) proceed immediately for a head hunting realising that high calibre candidates often do not apply to vacancy announcement, but they prefer to be approached. On this basis every member of the SC attending the meeting will provide confidentially and within approximately one week the name and the CV of a top choice potential candidate. The ceiling age of each candidate is 59 years old. The Chair of the SC, jointly with the selection committee will select the best 2 candidates to be added to the current short list of 4 and to be potentially interviewed following the interview of the already short listed candidates scheduled for on the 25-26 June 2007.

14. Donor support group meeting

The SC stressed the urgency for holding a donor support group as soon as possible to present the Business Plan (the revised version incorporating the comments of the SC will be on 30 May 2007) and discuss funding opportunities (sources of funding, requirements for donor internal decision making and follow up). Several members of the SC committee volunteered to approach donors and advocate support for GFAR prior to the Donor Support Group meeting. In addition to the final version of the Business Plan, the Secretariat will prepare a short briefing note in bullet points to facilitate conveying the same messages. The Chair of the SC informed that he already discussed with Mr. Rodney Cooke, Chair of the Donor Support Group, the dates and venue of the meeting and agreed on the a one day meeting to be chosen between 28 June and 4 July 2007 after the interviews of the short listed candidates already scheduled for 25-26 June. Ms. Barbara Becker considered that the period of early July is more suitable as the end of June conflicts with the EARD meeting on the European Meeting on agricultural research for development. Dr. Slama was requested to follow up with Mr. Rodney Cooke on the timing of the next DSG meeting.

15. Closing Remarks

The Chair thanked the members of the Steering Committee for contributing to the vibrant and constructive discussions in the meeting. He also thanked the GFAR Secretariat staff in preparation of the documents and all those involved in supporting and contributing to the success of the meeting. He thanked the Egyptian Government and thanked H. E. Mr. Amin Abaza, the Minister for Agriculture, Government of Egypt for facilitating the holding of the meeting, arrangements to visit Agricultural Research Centres and the Agricultural Museum and hosting a dinner for members of the GFAR Steering Committee.