Discussion Paper
Linking Mechanism for the General Assembly of Centers
and the System Management Board

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide initial information on which to brainstorm a preliminary proposal for consideration by the Centers about the main items that ought to be included in a constitutional document of the General Assembly of Centers, as provided for in in Articles 5.3 to 5.7 of the Charter of the CGIAR System Organization, including how it will maintain regular lines of communication with the System Management Board.

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Proposing a Constitutional Document for the General Assembly of Centers, including a linking mechanism to the System Management Board

Part 1: Background & Objectives

1.   The Charter of the CGIAR System Organization ("**Charter**"), as the new governing document of the CGIAR System Organization, has established two separate entities composed primarily, or exclusively of Center representatives: respectively, the System Management Board ("**Board**") with a majority of Center representatives, and the General Assembly of Centers ("**General Assembly**") with Center membership exclusively.

2.   The functions Board clearly defined in the CGIAR System Framework and Charter. By comparison, the role of the General Assembly is not as exhaustively defined, and the rules of procedure are still to be defined. The Charter does not clarify whose role it is to take leadership in that regard. This is no simple task as it involves building the General Assembly – as well as the mechanisms that link it to the System Management Board – nearly from scratch.

3.   The use of 'constitutional document' means any formal text that will be required to define the operations and functions of the General Assembly in addition to the skeletal detail that has been included in the Charter. Further discussion with the legal team will be required to determine the appropriate approach.

4.   Part 4 of this discussion paper outlines suggested next steps for gathering feedback from Centers and the System Council following the System Management Board's first meeting in Paris.

Part 2: The General Assembly of Centers as defined in the Charter

5.   Articles 5.3 – 5.7 of the Charter of the System Organization provide for the following procedures and roles for the General Assembly

The General Assembly of Centers

5.3   The General Assembly of Centers shall be a forum for Centers to discuss issues related to the CGIAR System and CGIAR System Organization. The Centers shall meet as often as necessary, but at least once in each calendar year as a General Assembly of Centers.

5.4   At a General Assembly of Centers, each Center shall have a single vote. The quorum for a meeting and decision making shall be a two-thirds majority of all the Centers.

5.5   The General Assembly of Centers shall be chaired by a Center on an annual rolling basis. The Chair shall set the time, date and place of the meeting, and the System Management Office shall support the organization of the General Assembly meetings.

5.6   The General Assembly of the Centers shall include the following functions:

(a)   nominate for election all candidates for members of the System Management Board in accordance with the agreed upon process and criteria;

(b)   elect a Chair of the General Assembly of Centers;

(c)   approve a mechanism based on a proposal from the System Management Board for determining the contribution of each Center to the operating budget of the System Organization;

(d)   receive the reports of the Chair of the System Management Board and of the Executive Director of the System Organization;

(e)   consider proposed amendments to this Charter; and

(f)   approve the Center representatives to serve on the System Council.

5.7   The General Assembly shall have rules of procedure that provide for the location and arrangements to conduct meetings and elaborate, to the extent necessary, on the provisions hereunder. These rules of procedure shall be made publicly available for transparency purposes.

Part 3: Questions for Discussion: Developing a Constitutional Document for the General Assembly

6. The following are proposed as the key areas to be included in the proposal for the 'Constitution' of the General Assembly, including its links to the Board:

A. Roles of the General Assembly
  i.   What roles should be envisioned for beyond those outlined in Article 5.6 of the Charter, if any?
  ii.   What will be the role of the General Assembly vis-à-vis the Science of the CGIAR? [NB: there is no reference to a function pertaining to science (neither implementation nor evaluation) in the roles outlined in the Charter]
  iii. Should the General Assembly have a collective resource mobilization function for all Centers?

B. General Assembly annual event and meetings:
  i.   What will be the main objectives of the annual gathering of Centers?
  ii.   How often should the group meet virtually?
  iii. What should be the average duration of the annual gathering?
  iv.   Should the General Assembly have independent observers, ex-officio members, or regularly invited participants?

C. Chair of the General Assembly:
  i.   What will be the process of the General Assembly for electing its Chair?
  ii.   What will be the main roles and responsibilities of the Chair?
  iii. Should a Co-Chair be appointed in the event of the Chair's inability to perform their duties? Should this person be the incoming Chair?
  iv.   Should there be a Director General and Board Chair as Co-Chairs? Can they be sitting members of the System Management Board?

D. General Assembly identification of observers on the System Council:
  i.   How will the General Assembly decide which two representatives to send to the System Council as active observers?
  ii.   How long should the term of the active observers on the System Council be? (1 year?)
  iii. Can a Director General and Board member from the same Center serve as active observers on the System Council at the same time?

E. **Rules and procedures of the General Assembly**
  i. What rules and procedures need to be developed for a smooth operation of the General Assembly?
  ii. What are the possible background documents or antecedents that can be built upon to develop these rules and procedures?

F. **Funding the General Assembly**
  i. How should any travels or associated expenses of the General Assembly Chair or other participants in the General Assembly annual meeting be paid for?

G. **Committees of the General Assembly:**
  i. Does the General Assembly require standing committees? If yes, which ones?
  ii. Also if yes, should any standing committees of the General Assembly include System Management Board members?
  iii. Should the General Assembly institutionalize regional committees and working groups? (e.g. to facilitate regional resource mobilization, site integration, shared services).

H. **Linking mechanisms between General Assembly and System Management Board:**
  i. Should there be a minimum required frequency for meetings of the Chairs of the System Management Board and General Assembly?
  ii. How often and on what key topics will reporting from the System Management Board Chair to the General Assembly Chair be required?
  iii. How, and how often, will the Chair of the General Assembly share System Management Board reports (and draft papers?) with Centers to gather feedback for submission to the System Management Board?
  iv. Should the System Management Board hear a regular report from the Chair of the General Assembly during its meetings?
  v. What mechanisms could be developed to monitor and confirm there is no duplication of roles between the General Assembly, the System Management Board, and System Management Office? (e.g. with regards to resource mobilization)

Part 4: Possible Next Steps

7.   Table 1, below, sets out a proposal for actions to take following the meeting to institutionalize and implement the General Assembly and System Management Board linking mechanism proposal:

Table 1: Proposal to take forward development of the linking mechanism

	Action	By when
1	Compile notes on session and incorporate into draft proposal	July 15
2	Circulate draft to all Center DGs and Board Chairs	July 15
3	Discuss proposal and establish working groups on sub-items during conference call with all DGs and Board Chairs	July 18
4	Receive and compile feedback from Centers and Board Chairs	July 22
5	Circulate revised draft to all SMB members, Center DGs and Board Chairs, and **System Council**	July 25
6	Receive and compile feedback from all SMB members, Center DGS and Board Chairs, and **System Council**	Aug 8
7	Circulate revised draft to legal team from System Office and Centers for development as Annex to the System Charter (or other legal arrangement as appropriate)	Aug 8
8	[Legal team takes over]	
9	First General Assembly proposal	September 25-26 (2nd meeting of the SMB in Mexico)