



21 July 2017

Dear Colleagues,

My colleague Raffaele Maiorano and I are appreciative of the confidence placed on us to lead the organisation for the next three years and are also alert to some of the critical challenges it faces. By way of this letter, I wish to appraise you of the process following on my appointment as GFAR Chair and share with you my preliminary thoughts on how I wish to embrace this responsibility. I hope it will stimulate some level of response and discussion using this google platform that I understand is intended to facilitate ongoing engagement among the GFAR Constituents and stakeholders.

It was useful and timely to spend a few days 10th – 14th July in Rome at the GFAR /FAO offices to be introduced to staff and key partners as well as deepen my understanding of GFAR its structure, operations and challenges. It was also beneficial that the Vice Chair – Raffaele Maiorano could be there for two of the days and has now gone back to visit and complete his first round of orientation meetings.

I started the week with meetings with Mark Holderness: Executive Secretary, GFAR and Ren Wang: FAO Assistant Director General, Agriculture and Consumer Protection Department and Shantanu Mathur: Lead Adviser to the Associate Vice-President, Operations, at IFAD, enabled me to understand the context within which GFAR operates inclusive of the opportunities and challenges. I was appraised of the work of the Steering Committee especially the activities and accomplishments that were undertaken this year. Notably the process and decisions on the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of GFAR.

We also discussed the potential role of the Chair, Vice Chair and Steering Committee in supporting the Executive Secretary with respect to the representation of GFAR at the multiple platforms that serve to enhance the level of connection and visibility of GFAR. To achieve this effectively we plan interactions at four levels namely between the Chair, Vice Chair and Executive Secretary; at the level of EXCO; as the Steering Committee and in the context of the GCARD (4). I am of the view that we should introduce two virtual interactions with the Steering Committee; plan for at

least 4 EXCO meetings in the year to invigorate the necessary continuity on the collective actions by all partners.

Other engagements during the week included information sessions with the staff members who were present, meetings with the Independent Science and Partnership Council (CGIAR), Ms Brave Ndisale Director/Strategic Programme Leader, Food Security and Nutrition and some of her team. These interactions and the fact that it was not possible to meet José Graziano da Silva the Director General of FAO, Gilbert F. Hounbo the President of IFAD and other strategic partners based in Rome necessitate a follow-up trip soon. On the 11th July 2017, we held an EXCO meeting that focused on the budget, staffing and priorities for the coming six months. EXCO confirmed the need to focus its attention on the organisational matters, and ensure that the process for the External Review and a new MTP is in place.

Raffaele and I have resolved to focus our strategic support in the short term on the organisational matters, strategic communication and stakeholder engagements. It is our hope that we will be able to contribute to GFAR effectiveness during our period in office and we commit to being open to suggestion, listening to your experiences, having open dialogues and interactions and ensuring that as a collective we are resourceful and undertake actions that are impactful in making research and innovation in agriculture and food security effectively transform lives and contribute to sustainable development.

Kind Regards,

Bongiwe Njobe
GFAR Chair