

Appendix A

Workshop Proceedings for the FANRPAN-IFPRI Regional Policy Dialogue on Biotechnology, Agriculture, and Food Security in Southern Africa

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Meeting location: Senators Hotel, Caesars Gauteng, Johannesburg, South Africa

Meeting date: April 25–26, 2003

Meeting moderator: Dr. John Mugabe, New Partnership for Africa's Development
Science and Technology Forum

DAY 1

Welcome and Introductions

**Presentation: Dr. Tobias Takavarasha, Food, Agriculture,
and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network (FANRPAN)**

Dr. Takavarasha opened the meeting, noting that the initiative was the result of many interactions with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), regional experts on biotechnology, and government representatives. He expressed his hope that the dialogue would contribute to the development of proposals and recommendations to address the critical subject dealt with in many high-level meetings—issues related to genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Dr. Takavarasha further noted that one of FANRPAN's central roles is to facilitate policy dialogue such as this one within the region.

Meeting Moderator: Dr. John Mugabe, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Science and Technology Forum

Dr. Mugabe clarified his own role in the meeting, namely to facilitate dialogue. He welcomed Dr. Joachim von Braun, IFPRI's director general, to outline IFPRI's expectations for the dialogue. Each participant would also have an opportunity to express his or her expectations for the two days of dialogue.

Objectives, Expectations, and Ground Rules**Presentation: Prof. Joachim von Braun, IFPRI**

Dr. von Braun indicated that IFPRI's role in this event and in this process would be that of a partner to African organizations.

Both IFPRI and FANRPAN view it as very important to put this theme of biotechnology policies for the southern Africa region on the agenda, because it is felt that this is one of three key issues that need to be addressed (the others being food security and land issues). IFPRI is addressing this theme because it is a global issue as it is not only a hot issue here in the southern African region.

IFPRI's perspective on biotechnology is that developing countries must make their own informed decisions. Biotechnology may become a key driving force for economic and social development. The questions are these: For whom? For what? What regulations should be put in place? How can biotechnology be made to work for the poor? And how can technological policy options be employed that are environmentally sustainable, efficient, and effective?

In discussions in various parts of the world regarding the state of affairs in agricultural policymaking (in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America), this issue is on the agenda of policymakers and continues to irritate consumers and producers. Opportunities are recognized, but potential risks are acknowledged as well. The perspective differs by region, but in all regions key uncertainties and controversies in biotechnology policies remain unresolved. IFPRI has the opportunity and challenge to facilitate learning around the world. The dialogue should therefore be inclusive and largely driven by actors in the region.

The process of this policy dialogue aims to raise awareness, promote dialogue elsewhere, and drive toward consensus building. This meeting is embedded in this larger process. The short-term aim is decisionmaking support. The ultimate aim is consistent institutions and policies that govern biotechnology policy and related capacity building based on increased understanding and greater awareness and consensus on simple policy trade-offs between benefits, risks, and sustainability.

The key questions to be addressed at this meeting are these:

- What are the major issues of debate and dispute dynamics around agricultural biotechnology in the southern African context?
- Who are the relevant stakeholders? Many of them sit at the table, but not all of them.
- What questions might be suitable for joint fact-finding and follow-up?
- What are the constraints—financial, institutional, legal, and technological—under which we are operating? It takes resources to undertake technology assessment dialogues. It takes time, commitment, and money.
- What sort of commitments can be made by this group for follow-up actions?

The expectations and ground rules are easily spelled out:

- Participation is to be active, open, and fearless.
- There is to be no privileged position a priori.
- Every opinion matters.
- Disagreements are to be open and respectful.
- A constructive, forward-looking perspective is to be adopted.

The aim is to have not a general debate on biotechnology, but rather one on legal and administrative decisions and processes governing biotechnology, and on how to engage with them fruitfully. To what extent are these decisions and processes driven by the international legal environment (e.g., biosafety, the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the upcoming World Trade Organization [WTO] negotiations), and how can this initiative feed into them? This is a first step that could grow into a global process.

Meeting Moderator: Dr. John Mugabe, NEPAD Science and Technology Forum

Dr. Mugabe began by noting that good policies are formulated just before cabinet meetings and after cabinet meetings. Policies are in many cases developed in very

informal settings. He encouraged the group to strive for informality. He went on to make the following points.

There are many policy questions that must be addressed, and the range of controversial issues that governments think about is growing. The group may therefore wish to reflect on those issues, without necessarily aiming to arrive at consensus on all or any of them. The group might develop a typology of issues that regional governments and stakeholder groups are facing to see if biotechnology will be appropriately used for human development. The aim is not to invest a good part of our energies in debating the issues, but rather to reflect on what the issues are that need to be high on the political agenda and that need more research.

Some key questions that must be considered are these:

- Under what conditions are we going to engage various stakeholders?
- What constituencies will strive toward consensus, and what constituencies do we need to bring to the consensus-making process?
- It is very clear to those of us who talk about biotechnology every day that the debate in this region is still confined to very small, isolated groups. How do we go about building constituencies?
- What is the appropriate locus?
- Who is going to develop the biotechnology policies at the subregional and regional levels: ministries of agriculture? ministries of health?
- Given that the issues are wide-ranging, who should be at the policymaking table?

The aim is not to develop consensus, but rather to reach agreement on the nature of the process or processes that our countries and our region need to use to move toward consensus. Specifically, what kinds of process or processes are going to be required to ensure discussion of controversial issues? The idea is to reflect on the types of processes that have been used by other actors, as there are many groups already investing in policy development (at national and regional levels). Whom should we be seeking to influence, and how can we ensure that one ministry will not develop a policy that is in conflict with a policy developed by another ministry?

Dr. Mugabe then invited participants to raise any issues and offer their expectations. What did they want to get out of this dialogue? Were their expectations different from IFPRI's and FANRPAN's expectations, or was there a convergence?

The answers were provided in a moderated plenary session.

Moderated Plenary Discussion

Dialogue participants raised several expectations of the meeting, including the following:

- To debate and come up with some solutions on how there can be a harmonized regional policy on issues such as biosafety or the benefits of biotechnology
- To have a learning experience
- To link biotechnology with trade policy
- To build consensus on the kinds of issues that are on the policymaking agenda and to communicate those issues to those who are responsible for policy
- To arrive at consensus on the process and bring those that are not involved in this dialogue to the process, particularly farmers, consumer groups, and civil-society organizations or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
- To develop a set of clear activities and output as well as indicators to measure progress from the first dialogue to the last
- To establish strong, collaborative relationships
- To establish a strong, collaborative group that can support the building of policy in localized areas
- To find one or two items on which to focus action
- To learn from others at the meeting about effective approaches and processes (i.e., how to build confidence in the application of these technologies)
- To consider constructive linkages between this policy dialogue and other dialogues addressing the long-term food security of the region
- To explicitly state common interests, such as a bountiful and nutritious food supply that is environmentally sustainable
- To further understand how the policy arena and the research agenda interact and to examine the role of the public sector in the process

- To consider how to balance the government's need to face short-term pressing challenges (current food needs) with long-term issues, such as biotechnology
- To share experiences in terms of difficulties and successes in biosafety and biotechnology
- To examine missing links between national policies and regional policy approaches and to determine which issues are best addressed regionally or subregionally vs. nationally
- To hear more about the expectations, approaches, and role of the SADC Advisory Committee on Biotechnology

This question was also raised: Since this is seen as a long-term strategy fitting into other strategies, what are IFPRI's and FANRPAN's visions of how this first dialogue will fit into other processes? How will they move the outcomes of this meeting forward?

Dr. Takavarasha indicated that FANRPAN's role is facilitative in terms of communicating key policy findings to policy decisionmakers, whether that information is obtained through policy dialogues, publications, or research undertaken by policy researchers in the region. FANRPAN is trying to fill the gap that exists between what the policy researchers recommend in their findings and what policy decisionmakers are able to implement (specifically in the area of biotechnology, in addition to other areas such as land, food security, trade, and strategic food reserves, among others). He noted that biotechnology is becoming an important factor in food security and in trade, and yet the level of understanding by key decisionmakers is an issue that needs more debate. Dr. Takavarasha referred to the participants' mention of harmonization in terms of understanding, in terms of biosafety regulations, in terms of anticipated benefits of biotechnology, and in terms of effects of trade, and noted that these are issues that need to be brought to the agenda in order to better equip policymakers. He explained that FANRPAN seeks to acquire as much information as possible so that, as a network, they can contribute by passing it on to policymakers quickly. There is a need for frequent meetings in order to address the information gap. One way to maximize the use of such meetings is to ensure that FANRPAN strengthens its linkages and dialogue with key policymakers, and another is to ensure that meetings that bring people together become as effective as possible.

Dr. von Braun relayed what influenced his thinking on the need for such dialogues, especially in this region. It was in his first week as director general of IFPRI in September 2002 of that he was visited in Washington by a delegation from

Zambia. That delegation was sent by their president, and asked a whole host of questions related to GMOs and biosafety, food safety, and trade and food culture–related issues. Dr. von Braun noted that it became pretty clear after three hours of meeting and exchanging perceptions that there was an urgent need of a better-informed debate. He continued, remarking that in looking at the diversity in the southern African region he noticed that the contrast in the area of biotechnology could not be starker between perceptions and level of use and the expectations from the technology. He noted that the issue raised about whether a subregional or a national approach may be more advantageous than a regional approach is a very important one, one that requires debate and analysis. However, Dr. von Braun questioned whether a national approach would be beneficial in the long run, because the subregion could benefit immensely from a coherent agricultural, biotechnology, trade, and rural development policy.

In response to the question posed about the vision brought to this dialogue, Dr. von Braun indicated that the dialogue helps in joint agenda setting, with milestones and goals to be achieved in the area of improving policy implementation of biotechnology policy. This can be structured in four areas:

- The agenda related to consumption and consumer benefits
- Concerns with environmental safety
- The area of trade, including intellectual property rights
- Issues surrounding politics, culture, and perception

This final area cannot be left off the table because, Dr. von Braun explained, for his visitors from Zambia this was at the top of the agenda (issues such as ethics, food culture perceptions, foreign policy, diplomatic complications, etc.). These issues do not lend themselves to the simplification of the science-based vs. value-based debate. Dr. von Braun indicated that he would be interested in being better informed about what is driving this fourth component, which is influencing the decisionmaking on biotechnology. He noted that these issues are very critical for the final outcomes of coherent food and agriculture biotechnology–related policies.

Dr. Mugabe noted that participants have common expectations of the dialogue. He offered two important points:

- The dialogue must add value to ongoing processes.
- The dialogue should be treated as a learning process; participants are here to exchange information.

Agricultural and Biotechnology and GMOs in Southern Africa: A Regional Synthesis

Presentation: Julius Mugwagwa, Biotechnology Trust of Zimbabwe

Key points made during the presentation were these:

- This overview is based on reports of various stakeholders and is intended to ensure that we do not start from scratch or reinvent issues, but start from the same level.
- Biotechnology has been around a long time, since the times when people started domesticating animals and plants. Only recently did a Hungarian engineer coin the term “biotechnology,” but we have had these technologies for a long time. We are all aware of the work that has taken place in the late 20th century: the technology between the two world wars (penicillin); in the mid-1950s the deciphering of the structure of DNA, and further developments to do with the ability to cut DNA and hereditary materials, using enzymes; in the early 1970s the discovery or the invention of the ability to multiply genes, DNA; and in the 1990s cloning (Dolly the sheep). Now we have a lot of GM products on the market. People are talking about genomics and are trying to understand a whole sequence of genes in the human body. We are talking about a technology that involves the use of biological organisms in the production of goods and services. While biotechnology, working with genetic material, is generally accepted in medicine, it is controversial in other sectors, including agriculture.
- There are great differences among the countries of southern Africa regarding the scientific activity they have undertaken in biotechnology.
 - Agriculture is the main area where biotechnology is being applied in southern Africa, mainly in the dimension of crop improvement. A few countries are employing genetic engineering techniques, but these are only in the laboratory; only South Africa does so commercially.
 - All countries are employing tissue culture techniques, and most have invested in biological nitrogen fixation. Fermentation technology, marker-assisted selection, artificial insemination and embryo transfer, molecular diagnostics and molecular markers, and genetic modification are also being widely employed. Considerable training in these techniques is underway in the region.
 - South Africa is really active in almost all techniques. There are a lot of universities and institutions, and the agricultural research center is quite

involved. A number of products are on the market, for example *Bacillus thuringiensis* (*Bt*) maize and a cotton variety. Mauritius already has a GM sugar cane variety ready for release and is awaiting adoption of a biosafety framework in order for it to be released. Tanzania is mainly doing research work, but training is also really implicit.

- Little information is available for Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Seychelles.

- The SADC countries also vary with regard to their development of regulatory frameworks. Most countries currently do not have biotechnology policies in place. The development of biosafety systems is needed to manage or to ensure the safe development and application of biotechnology. Based on a study that was conducted in 2001, countries can be placed in three broad categories:
 - Those that have legally binding frameworks in place already—Malawi, South Africa, and Zimbabwe (further clarification is needed on Namibia)
 - Those that have draft legislation—Mauritius, Namibia (waiting for clarification), and Zambia
 - Countries that are still in the initial stages, with very preliminary guidelines—Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, the Seychelles, and Tanzania

Little information is available on the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

- There are great differences among policymakers in the region in awareness about scientific issues and specific policy details.
 - Countries were at different levels of preparedness to handle GM issues during the food crises brought on by the 2001–02 drought. There was limited awareness of biotechnology issues across the region, as evidenced by the debate. In some cases the debate was informed or driven by emotions, or it was subject to the big divide between the United States and Europe.
 - The awareness varies from high to low, and this depends on the category of stakeholder to which one is referring. Life scientists are highly conversant and quite aware when compared to other scientists and other people. A number of dissemination activities and awareness-raising activities are ongoing in some countries—for instance, those convened and coordinated by AfricaBio, Biowatch, and Safe Age in South Africa; by the Biotechnology Trust, the Regional Agricultural and Environmental Network, and the Biotechnology Association in Zimbabwe; and by the National Institute for Scientific and Industrial Research, the Biosafety Committee, and the National Biotechnology Alliance in Zambia. Also important are regional efforts by the

Southern Africa Regional Biosafety Program, Consumers International, the Biotechnology Trust of Africa, the African Center for Technology Studies, the African Biotechnology Stakeholder Forum, NEPAD, and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP).

- Increased use of GMOs in the region is contingent on policy development.
 - There is a strong correlation between the state of policy development in a country and the level of use of GM techniques in those countries. Those countries that are active in the use of these techniques are also the countries that have legislation—for example, Malawi, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. Mauritius, Namibia, and Zambia are almost there.
 - Some of the challenges that are faced in trying to engage the public in this biotechnology debate are these:
 - Commercial confidentiality
 - Costs of various levels of participation
 - The interface between farming systems and social/cultural factors
 - External influences
 - Interactions among food aid, politics, science, and regulations
 - Meeting these challenges implies progress in the following areas:
 - Identifying regional needs and priorities
 - Building scientific and regulatory capacity
 - Creating an enabling environment for research and use of products
 - Promoting regional approaches to biotechnology issues

Moderated Plenary Discussion

The Chair highlighted some key points emerging from the presentation:

Technology investment. We are not dealing with a simple technique, but a system of techniques and a growing body of science. A distinction may need to be made between the techniques and the products.

Public awareness. Public awareness is important. Is it really crucial for a farmer to know what biotechnology (genomics) is or to know the content of the products? What pieces of information need to be provided to civil society and laypersons? Who raises awareness?

Policy formulation and research and development. As indicated in the presentation, those countries that have been able to develop policies and biosafety regimes have seen increasing investment in research and development. Do all countries

require policies today? Do certain countries need to worry about research and development before they move into policy development? As countries build scientific capacity and new processes and products, policy questions may become critical. Is there a correlation between policy development and investment in research and development? Should countries wait to invest until they have a better sense of what biotechnology is?

Trade issues. Should countries be worried about what the impact of these technologies will be on their trade activities, whether in fact adoption of a particular product will undermine their trade relations? The presentation also alluded to the fact that biotechnology and GMO questions are increasingly moving into foreign policy domains. We need to think about how we influence foreign policy, as opposed to leaving discussions of policy development in biotechnology within the spheres of countries.

Intellectual property protection. It would be useful to better understand the content of the various biosafety frameworks, to which extent they are addressing biotechnology, and to which extent are they biased.

National, subregional, and regional agendas. It was clear that we are seeing a growing number of initiatives in biotechnology, and this increase could be a source of potential tension and conflicts. To what extent do they undermine our efforts as a subregion to reach consensus? What are the vested interests of some of these groups (which have clearly formed agendas)? We need to understand those agendas in order to bring the groups to the policymaking process.

EU and U.S. biotechnology policy. Is there a unified EU policy on biotechnology, given the nature of the investment each of the countries is making? Is there a U.S. policy? The two regions tend to be treated as if one has a more homogeneous, uniform policy of pro-biotechnology and the other has a more formed policy of anti-biotechnology.

Food culture. In this subregion, is biotechnology not accepted because food is so part and parcel of our cultures that we do not want to taint food products by modifying them?

The majority of the discussion focused on issues surrounding regulatory systems and biosafety policy, protection of traditional indigenous seed and plant varieties, arguments for increasing investment in biotechnology research and human resource capacity, and exchange of information, among other items.

Participants raised the following points regarding regulatory systems and biosafety policies:

- If people are aware of their rights as citizens, they can monitor the regulatory mechanisms in place so there are no violations.
- If a country can police itself, how can the point be made that countries need each other? If a country knows that the regulatory framework and infrastructure are not there, can it police itself to control crossborder movement of GM products?
- The regulatory system in South Africa, which has been in place for almost four years, originally began with the UN debates on weapons of mass destruction and concerns about biosecurity. The debate evolved to focus on GMOs, and it soon became clear that there was a need to set up a system whereby people could apply for permits in order to operate. However, as time went on, the government discovered problems with compliance and crossborder exchange of seeds, which often has a cultural dimension. Questions arose, such as how to ensure compliance and how to make neighboring governments aware of violations. There is a need to find ways of handling the products and the seed. It has taken too long to bring a harmonized regulatory system into existence.
- Tanzania has a fairly advanced draft document on biosafety policy, and some scientists are asking why it cannot be used on an interim basis, because they do not want to stop at the field trial level, but want to move on to commercial production.
- Each country must first develop its own regulation policy, and then that policy can be harmonized with the policies of its neighbors.
- Governments have many demands on their resources, and biotechnology policy regulations are costly and compete with other government functions. How can these costs be cut without jeopardizing safety, efficiency, equity, and other considerations? In an environment in which government has deficiencies in implementing, regulating, and enforcing in the interests of farmers, consumers, and traders, it is a tempting alternative to shift the burden onto the private sector. This is a difficult proposition because of legal responsibility and accountability, but perhaps the roles of government vs. the private sector could be clarified in terms of shouldering responsibilities.

- Unlike research, policy is a very messy business, and events on the ground, where decisions are often made in an unclear policy environment, often overtake the measures taken at the policy level. Can the question of biosafety be considered in the context of the trade-regulatory environment?
- Most developing countries insist that farmers enjoy farmers' rights benefits, which allow for exchange of seeds whether across borders or within districts. The minute that right is denied, smallholder farmers' ability to successfully use GM crops to their benefit is precluded.
- For some time, farmers are going to share their seed; that way technology can benefit those who need it most. This ongoing system should be supported, and scientists may wish to look at these options to bring everyone on board in terms of benefit sharing.
- What countries have signed the biosafety protocol? The protocol should make it easy for countries to import GM products. South Africa has made the decision to sign, but must ratify it in order to accede. Many countries have not necessarily signed, but have declared their intention and are in the process of doing so. It is one of the criteria a country must meet to access funds for capacity building for biosafety.
- Biotechnology companies want to be seen as adhering to the law, and will not introduce seed into a country that does not have biosafety legislation. If the company discovers that seed has crossed the border, they will write a letter to the government indicating that it is not with their consent. However, it is inevitable, especially when countries have been exchanging germ plasm for years. This is why a biosafety system must be developed quickly.
- To what extent does commercial confidentiality exist? How readily is the information available to users, and does the information need to be known fully by all stakeholders? To regulators of countries, there is full disclosure; they demand to know everything, but they are bound by confidentiality. Users of the technology may be provided information on the function, benefits, efficacy, and scientific rigor, but not specific details on how the product is made, which could be commercially detrimental to the company. Increasingly, companies find that the more transparency and disclosure there is, the more acceptable the technology will be, given the surrounding controversy.

- The advantage of the regulator is that he or she is able to see what information companies claim to be confidential, and whether another company has claimed the same information. The regulators also try to allow public research institutions to obtain a level of access to resources in terms of benefits or the proprietary nature of some of the technologies in the hope that the information will filter down to the users.
- The regulatory systems existing in North America and Europe are being strongly revisited by consumers, industry, and policymakers and seem deficient in areas such as biosafety, food safety, accountability, and the responsibility of various actors. Southern Africa can learn from these experiences and avoid mistakes.

Another key issue is the protection and support of traditional indigenous seeds and plant varieties. Participants raised the following issues:

- There is a need to take particular care in promoting or supporting existing efforts to conserve what is indigenous to the region. Many crops are not commercially valuable but are of immense value to communities and farmers. The main challenge is to build capacity to be able to categorize and reference them for future or continued use.
- It is not that we should necessarily refrain from genetically modifying these crops, but we should know what they are before we replace them.
- To what extent have efforts been made to catalogue and patent traditional seed varieties? There is a great movement among countries with biodiversity to categorize and add the varieties to databases to ensure that patents on them will be stopped if attempted.
- Countries should also consider patenting plant varieties under the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights agreement. Databases to catalogue traditional plants can protect genetic resources from bioprospecting. It is crucial to introduce plant variety rights side by side with patent laws as a way to increase and protect farmers' rights.
- The *African Model Law* on new plant variety rights and farmers' rights, developed two years ago, has not been used much. It provides various options, and not all have to be taken on board.

- Although traditional seeds do not qualify for protection (because they are not new), companies would not be interested in them for the same reason—because they would not be able to patent them. However, elements from the seeds can be patented; they do not have to be protected in their original form. African countries have a lot of valuable material and must put in place mechanisms of accessing their plants, so they will not be left open for anyone to benefit from without returns to the people who have nurtured them for so many years.

A participant asked this question: if a ministry of agriculture needs to convince the minister of finance or parliament to pass an incremental budget to deal with biotechnology capacity building in research laboratories and human resources, what arguments could they use? Others responded with the following comments:

- An economy cannot survive in isolation; this technology should be obtained in terms of regional trade.
- If a country does not invest in this new technology, their environmental and food security will be undermined.
- If the country's economy is going to be competitive internationally, there must be some indigenous residual biotechnology.
- This technology will improve the well-being of the rural sector.
- Countries should be urged to build up indigenous laboratories and capacity to avoid putting themselves in negative power relations.
- This is not an outlandish technology of the West or one that is in the hands of multinationals. Indigenous institutions and our own scientists are working on this.
- Look at what the countries around the world with the biggest food security and population problems are doing. China and India are investing quite a lot in biotechnology, and would not do so if they were not receiving benefits. What benefits have they accrued from investing in biotechnology?
- Although few African countries will have the resources to develop their own large biotechnology programs, they are still able to benefit from the technology

and should invest in regulatory frameworks and research in order to facilitate intelligent borrowing.

The group discussed the need to continually update the useful tables developed by Dr. Mugwagwa. Some corrections and additions were suggested, including these:

- Tanzania has made great strides over the past few years. Programs in microbiology and environmental and industrial technology have begun. A bachelor of science program in biotechnology is being started around issues of crops, agriculture, and medicine. Human resource capacity is missing but will improve.
- It was suggested that presentations be made about the extent of biotechnology research vis-à-vis the ongoing agricultural research within countries so that they can appreciate the relationship between the two.
- It was also suggested that comparisons be made of the type of research undertaken with the problems the country has and how biotechnology can help.

Several other issues were discussed among participants, and the following remarks were made:

- The question “Do we need this technology?” may be simply answered “Yes” in the scientific arena, but in many other arenas there are still many unresolved concerns. The debate must be as inclusive as possible, with all sectors involved.
- Efforts should be made to have common conferences with both extremes of opinions represented; perhaps the debate will then move forward more quickly.
- When both sides are represented, the outcome is rarely positive. The only way to engage is to provide information on the ground and correct the misinformation that has been provided to consumers by those campaigning against the technology so the consumers can make their own decisions.
- A central issue is networking and communication. Information needs to be disseminated. It would be useful to share the experiences of national and regional networks and civil-society, advocacy, and research organizations to see how information can be effectively packaged. The generation of the right information is also important.

- Countries with low levels of public awareness activities may be able to work together, as awareness issues go across borders. It is suggested that a working party be formed on how to create synergies to work on communications activities across borders.
- How do we enable those with their PhDs to put what they have learned into practice?
- Some of the challenges of this technology are due to inequities and the fact that some people are not able to take advantage of development. Biotechnology has moved beyond the natural sciences to the level of genomics and bioinformatics, and the ability to manipulate genes and develop a product is now closely linked with information and communications technology, to which not all have access. This has implications for intellectual property rights (IPR) issues (who owns what genes?) and for the modes of production in our society.
- How can biotechnology research be viewed as a long-term development strategy in terms of overall development strategies (PRSPs, national development strategies)?
- In South Africa, it was not until a national biotechnology strategy was developed with its own research priorities that the ministry of finance was approached for funding.
- When dealing with populations that are 70 percent rural and 70 percent below the poverty line, it is critical to ask this: What does this technology mean to a country that is trying to feed its population? If introduced, will the technology speak to that priority?
- What about risks and uncertainties? Within the region it would not be difficult to convince someone in a policymaking position that biotechnology research and testing is important, especially given the more frequent droughts. As of now, farmers use inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, which are toxic and which are governed by rules to ensure that they are absent from food, just to achieve a successful harvest. It is a question of weighing costs and benefits.

The Chair closed the session, indicating that later discussions would not focus so much on the issues themselves, but on agreeing on a set of policy issues common to the countries in the subregion that the dialogue could address, and the process by which the dialogue would do so.

Dealing with Complex Public Disputes: Multistakeholder Approaches, Negotiation, and the Practice of Consensus Building

**Presentation: Ms. Michele Ferenz, Consensus Building Institute,
Cambridge, MA, USA**

Key points made during the presentation were these:

- Conflict resolution through policy dialogue
 - Nobody likes conflicts; they are long, costly, and painful, and a lot of people wonder whether negotiations are worth their while.
 - One negotiation concept that is useful here is called the best alternative to a negotiated agreement. It is based on the idea that the only reason participants would want to enter a policy dialogue or a negotiation (a policy dialogue is an ongoing negotiation) is because they have decided that it is the best way to achieve their goals.
 - A person will not enter a policy dialogue or negotiation because it is fashionable or the right thing to do.
 - If stakeholders think the best way to achieve their objectives is by not engaging in dialogue, the whole discussion is moot. They either think they have the power in different arenas and the world will eventually recognize they are right or they will use other avenues of influence.
 - A complete consensus will never be reached on a complex policy question, because there are people whose whole identity revolves around being against an issue. However, one should not disengage from a dialogue for that reason. There is value to interaction and dialogue with stakeholders whose opinions are more open.
 - Policy dialogues have been held around very emotional, complex issues. For instance, the World Commission on Dams held a global multistakeholder dialogue for two years involving thousands of people and a lot of resources. It is the ideal example.
 - The question for us is this: What, given the constraints of this region, can we achieve moving forward in our process?
 - The concept paper explains that we want to construct a policy dialogue involving lots of different stakeholders. The objective of this presentation is to address the following questions:
 - What are policy dialogues?
 - Why do we have them?
 - What are the gaps they fill?
 - What are the difficulties with them that are far from being resolved?

- A key issue already raised at this meeting is the concern about false information and misrepresentations. Some of the misinformation represents fears and concerns about our livelihoods, health, and environment, and they need to be taken seriously.
- The basic issues (disputes) in policy dialogues center on three issues:
 - Allocation of rights to resources
 - Distribution of benefits and costs
 - Balancing of economic, social, and environmental pillars
- Typically those kinds of disputes have a series of common attributes that make them difficult to deal with in established forums for decisionmaking, particularly in nation-states, judiciaries, and legislatures:
 - Long-term horizons
 - Multiple jurisdictions (crossborder issues, including borders within the country)
 - Science intensiveness
 - Potentially large impact on vulnerable populations
- Multistakeholder processes
 - Multistakeholder processes (MSPs) are designed to address the foregoing challenges.
 - MSPs started gaining currency and ground at the Rio Earth Summit in that they were formally endorsed as a legitimate and necessary way to arrive at a different way of decisionmaking.
 - The multistakeholder idea directly stems from negotiation theory and practice. Participants in a dialogue are not only exchanging information, but learning more and trying to achieve a joint objective. Participants can bargain over the exchange of resources, make joint decisions, and have mutual influence. There is a need for some form of interdependence. Does each individual here in the room believe he or she can achieve his or her strategies (corporate or otherwise) without other constituents in society? If so, then he or she is not interdependent and cannot fully participate in the process.
 - The conventional wisdom about negotiation is that it is an adversarial relationship—what one gains, the other loses. Participants often artificially inflate demands, trade concessions grudgingly, show no empathy, and challenge the legitimacy of others' claims. However, the intuition behind multistakeholder dialogues is that there is another way—one that will make people not worse off and, one hopes, better off.
 - But how are MSPs conducted? How do we know that we have a good outcome?

- A way of evaluating results is to strive for a process that is fair, efficient, wise (well-informed), and stable (so that it does not fall apart after an agreement is signed).
- Fairness includes due process, transparency in the process, predictability of the proceedings, and protection of confidentiality as much as possible.
- What is a good outcome? One answer is that participants should be at least as well off as without the process and, one hopes, better and not worse.
- Why have a policy dialogue? Because better decisions are based on efficiency, equity, wisdom, and stability. A policy dialogue has staying power and can be translated to other parts of the world in terms of the momentum of the process and the learning that was achieved during the process. It has legitimacy, and there is a certain amount of ownership on the part of the stakeholders because they feel that they were heard in the process.
- A policy dialogue constitutes one answer known as the crisis of implementation. The World Summit on Sustainable Development was supposed to be the “implementation summit,” as very little of what came out of Rio was implemented. One of the answers found was that governments cannot accomplish implementation by themselves. Business, civil society, and other actors have resources and knowledge and must be brought in if implementation is to happen. It is the same intuition that is behind partnerships and the integration of other actors, which are so fashionable now at the implementation level.
- There are several key procedural suggestions for effective multistakeholder approaches. Informality and a meeting space in a nice place far away from where we usually are create a different atmosphere. The procedure should be collaborative rather than adversarial. Skilled third-party assistance is absolutely crucial in the process in order to create a good atmosphere. An emphasis should be placed on analysis, not on how participants feel. There are a lot of questions and things that are unknown—what are those questions? Are there ways to jointly frame those questions and jointly answer them? Are there common ways of approaching the problems that can be defined jointly? Protection should be provided against pressures for participants to play directly to their constituencies. Transparency does not mean that each and every statement made in a room goes out to the public and the media (then the audience is not the people in the room, but the people outside). The process should be protected until participants are at the point at which they are ready to let their constituencies/communities know what came out of the process.

- Dialogues or negotiations are divided into two phases: (1) creating value, increasing the pie, and identifying more common interests and (2) deciding whatever has been achieved.
- Several process questions need to be considered as this group moves forward.
- We are in phase one. Questions to be asked include these:
 - Is there a compelling issue that needs to be addressed?
 - Does it need to be addressed through a policy dialogue? (One answer we heard in the discussion this morning was “No.” Maybe other people have different thoughts about this.)
 - If we do not do anything, what will happen?
 - Are the people here in the room and other stakeholders actually committed to continuing this process? (One of the things we heard is that we do not want a lot more meetings; we want action on the ground. However a policy dialogue is all about having meetings to try to exchange ideas and move beyond one-time, one-shot deals.)
 - Do people have the resources and the interest to move forward?
 - If yes, how do we do this? Define a purpose. (This is part of what we are trying to accomplish at this meeting.)
 - What are the dialogue’s objectives, tasks, and products?
 - What are the ground rules? Who should be a part of the dialogue, and how do participants engage each other?
 - What type of institutional structure should be used?
 - How will others be drawn into this process?
 - Should we have an issues assessment or a broader consultation before we zero in on certain issues that we think are priorities?
 - Should we have a steering committee? What should be its terms of reference?
 - What are our meeting procedures?
 - What types of interaction should we have with the media?
- Then the dialogue would move into the operational phase, in which participants would clarify their interests and common understandings and recognize the need for discussion away from the table (i.e., individual meetings, Internet processes). These are the kinds of questions the group needs to think about in order to move ahead in this process and have it considered transparent and legitimate. Very often this is not what happens; very often people get invited and then they go home.
- A few process problems that often arise, and that do not have any magic answers, should be flagged:

- *Representation.* Who speaks for whom? What kind of accountability is there? What kind of standards are there for participation? Would international NGOs, such as Greenpeace, or southern African NGOs be more plausible actors in this policy dialogue? Or perhaps both? Remember to be mindful of the legitimacy concern.
- *The link to official decisionmaking.* Government has legitimate concerns about their decisionmaking power, and they are resistant to stakeholder inclusion. There are very defined rules about who gets to be part of the conversation and who does not. Multistakeholder processes throw all of this up in the air, and it is not obvious that someone who claims they speak for a particular group of people actually does. One answer is to create circles of engagement.
- *Do you want an ad hoc body or permanent body?* There is the possibility of moving the dialogue along into something a little bit more stable and institutionalized.
- *Who are the stakeholders?* It is not just individuals, groups, and organizations who have an interest in the issue at hand, or have a responsibility to make a decision on an issue. It is also—and this is very important—those who have the power to thwart a decision.
- *Knowledge integration.* Which information is considered legitimate?
- *Resource mobilization and capacity building.* Are there things we need to do to make sure other stakeholders' voices are heard? Do we have a responsibility to do these things?

Moderated Plenary Discussion

Several points raised by Ms. Ferenz were further discussed by participants, including the nature of the policy dialogue process and issues revolving around authorization, reporting, legitimacy, funding, and participation in the dialogue.

The process of the policy dialogue was described as knowledge-intensive and nonlinear. An amount of information is available, and a range of stakeholders have to manage the complexity of the issues. The process does not start at point A and end at point Z, with the same agenda throughout the process. It is full of uncertainty; the outcome is not predetermined but rather changes depending upon the interests of the stakeholders. The process was also described as a collective learning process involving self-discovery and joint problem solving. The complex political environment needs to be appreciated in terms of how the stakeholders are managed. It should be understood that consensus may not arrive at the end and that a singular outcome should not be focused upon. Instead, consensus building should be the aim, recognizing that a range of intermediate outcomes will be generated along the way.

Meetings involving pro-GMO and anti-GMO groups in Zimbabwe were used as an illustrative example of groups' being able to debate and actually inform each other. Participants noted that this dialogue must have meetings constructed to enable people to focus beyond their positions and instead look at their own interests or those of their constituencies. Meetings should be moderated with the understanding that the group is on a negotiating platform, and participants should not be afraid to voice their interests and opinions. If trust and respect are created, participants will be able to find a common line.

It was also pointed out that there are alternatives to multistakeholder dialogues. For example, (a) a science-based workshop with conclusions relayed to policymakers; (b) a parliamentary hearing with subcommittees on agriculture and health, which prepares a lawmaking initiative that is then pondered broadly and across parliaments' factions; (c) open town hall meetings with delegates; (d) electronic dialogues, which are totally open to those who have access to the Internet (which may not be ideal for this region); or (e) media briefings and working indirectly through journalism, which can be a good facilitator of the dialogue. It was suggested that these other mechanisms be kept on the table, particularly in the interest of the regional culture. It was also proposed that a smaller committee be formed, which would determine, given constraints, the best possible feasible option based on the ideal presented by Ms. Ferenz. This may be a hybrid approach, adjusted to the cultural and political situation and the context of media, parliaments, and science. However, it was also pointed out that in considering alternate options the objective of the policy dialogue must be examined. Not all of the previously outlined alternatives have the same objective. For example, if the media are used as facilitators, this brings the dialogue into the advocacy realm and not the consensus-building realm.

Also in terms of the process, the idea of a neutral moderator was questioned, and it was suggested that the interests of the organization from which that person comes should be examined. However, it was also pointed out that moderators are often chosen by the group and can be dismissed by the group at any time. Therefore, the moderator has an incentive to keep various stakeholders engaged and to facilitate a fair process, because these issues will have professional effects for him or her. Some people moderate meetings for a living. It was also pointed out that there are ways to create teams of people/process managers that keep each other balanced and honest if the group distrusts the impartiality of one organization or individual.

Another key issue raised by the group was that this policy dialogue process needs to fit into the environment and context of the region. It was pointed out that the ideal process presented may need to be altered considering different policymaking cultures. Given that in some countries there is not such a thing as participation in

policymaking, will different policy environments determine different processes? It was questioned whether governments in southern Africa have decided to have a common policy or whether it is policy to not make any key decisions on this set of biotechnology issues for certain reasons. It was suggested that the group consider the different alternatives outlined previously and which would be most appropriate under what circumstances. It was also suggested that existing processes should be examined and lessons drawn from them. On the other hand, Ms. Ferenz pointed out that there is a danger of conflating culture and a certain kind of government structure. One argument is that it is not culturally acceptable to have certain types of consultations, but the idea of a policy dialogue should not be rejected on that basis. She indicated that her organization has brought the principles of multi-stakeholder dialogues to various parts of the world, including the Arab world, and it is not impossible; it just involves considering which parts of the process to adapt.

The group also considered the costs of such a process. It was acknowledged that in the short term these types of process are costly. A participant pointed out that in his country it took two years of consultation to pass one piece of legislation; it has been six months since it was passed, and it is yet to be implemented because consultations are being undertaken about how it is going to work on the ground. Is this process something that can be afforded? Costs also influence the mechanisms chosen for consultation. There are also costs of *not* undertaking the policy dialogue. What are the opportunity costs? And if a dialogue does go ahead, who pays the financial costs? How neutral is the funding agency?

Participants also raised the question of who authorizes the process. Is it a group of scientists that will essentially create a task force or panel to manage this process? Who is the client? Who is going to see the final product? Where will the group report in terms of expectations? Participants also asked who makes decisions in a consensus-building model. Who moves the common agreement or understanding reached by the group forward? In response, it was pointed out that any process requiring government action must go through government channels. However, participants in the dialogue can work in partnerships and each take a responsibility and move forward in a certain direction. It was indicated that what usually happens is that a plan is elaborated and presented to official decisionmakers, such as ministries or parliaments at the national level or the WTO at the international level. The group should identify which institutional bodies are empowered by the national community and the larger international community.

Linked to this discussion was the issue of the legitimacy of the process. A participant suggested that the group not be too shy in establishing a legitimate process, particularly given that some countries may approach this process with concern and criticism. Participants asked how “official” arguments coming out of the process

would be. How would certain participants not at the table be dealt with in terms of legitimacy? The importance of the element of trust was highlighted. It was pointed out that the issue of trust has not been well researched in terms of what role it plays in the acceptance of technologies; however, some research has indicated that the acceptance of technologies and persons is based on two elements: competence and trust, the strategic optimum being right in between. If the group talks only about the benefits, but not about the risks, trust is sacrificed. It is a function of how the group communicates. It was pointed out that having a diverse, multistakeholder body come to an agreement would enhance the public's trust and perhaps would enhance claims of legitimacy and competence at the regional or national levels.

Dr. von Braun indicated that FANRPAN and IFPRI carefully considered issues of funding and legitimacy when planning the workshop, and took the position that the workshop would be funded only by IFPRI resources, although there were indications that other donors would be willing to fund. He also pointed out that a self-selected internationally composed board of trustees governs IFPRI, and their composition and governance structures are transparent and public. It was also indicated that FANRPAN has a similarly legitimate governance structure. Dr. von Braun also pointed out that Dr. Mugabe was asked to chair the session not only because he is a skilled moderator, but also because his participation and the participation of NEPAD bring an Africawide legitimacy. He suggested that once a structure has been established, the group can approach other donors and there will not be a problem with legitimacy.

A participant suggested that funds from other sources come through one pot of general funding. This is preferred over direct funding from multinational private-sector companies, for example, because if they are direct donors, certain governments may not participate.

Another important topic discussed by participants was the issue of who is invited to the table. It was pointed out that very often the largest sector of the public (consumers) are the ones who are left out. There is then a problem of translating what has been discussed back onto the ground, and this can breed mistrust. It was suggested that the process be publicized as widely as possible, such as by listserv or the media, and that information on who else to include in the process be sought. Often the argument of lack of representativeness is brought out at the end of a dialogue in order to undermine the process. To avoid this criticism, stakeholders should be sought out and opportunities provided.

The group discussed the likely unevenness in understanding about biotechnology across participants. This places greater emphasis on facilitation and tailored awareness building. It was suggested that stakeholders be brought together before sitting down at a dialogue meeting to allow them to understand the subject

in a uniform manner and to create awareness. On the other hand, it was pointed out that participants would never be on equal terms at a high science level. However, it was indicated that one of the underlying assumptions about the inclusion of all stakeholders is that participants know on some level how something affects them, and although this may be a different kind of knowledge, this is where their input to the dialogue comes from. All stakeholders have concerns, questions, and fears that they can raise. It is the challenge of the moderator to bring all of the concerns onto the table and to facilitate an integrative process whereby practical issues can be on the agenda just as the policy issues are. These types of groups should not have to learn how to “speak the speak” to join.

Participants also asked whether the powerful could negotiate with the weak. The weak are the rural minority, the farmers; the powerful are the ones who have the scientific knowledge. How can that power be balanced? The weak may not be weak in terms of their opinions, but their circumstances have rendered them so. How do we structure the process to allow them to engage? It was pointed out that no process could fully get rid of power differentials. The question is whether an interaction of this sort is better for the powerless than an interaction of another sort. The mechanisms through which to achieve parity are the ground rules of the dialogue, which should ensure that equal time and equal space are given to everyone around the table, and those ground rules should be enforced by someone. A participant indicated that in his experience, differences between the farmers and the high-level policymakers did not show up in overall discussions. As long as the right environment and process are set up, everyone can come to the table and contribute. Another participant indicated that the group should be sensitive to the feelings of people it thinks are at a different level, as in her experience farmers often deeply resent the inference that they are not capable of absorbing some of the science that scientists can absorb. As many people as possible need to be brought to the table, because once the people are familiar with the technology, they will eventually appreciate it and consider whether they want it themselves.

Other points raised during the discussion revolved around what types of issues should be on the agenda and how they should be framed. It was pointed out that there are four different levels of decisionmaking that the group may want to address: (a) whether to invest in or permit biotechnology in agricultural systems, (b) how to regulate it, (c) what traits to develop in biotechnology research (which need to be grounded in the reality of the field), and (d) how to facilitate adoption of the technology by the end user (which also needs to be grounded in the reality of the field). It was suggested that the group consider an element of investment in order to make the approach different than those used for other initiatives. There is a case to be made that we should consider investing in skills that are important for the group to

have in order to move forward and make a difference. Finally, the question of timing was raised. How easy or difficult would it be to reach consensus given the issue and timing? It was suggested that a central notion of the multistakeholder approach might be to eliminate the time dimension.

Information Sharing: National and Regional Experiences

Dr. Mugabe indicated that through the group's discussions it had become clear that there are a variety of processes at the national and the subregional levels and that countries are experimenting. He therefore proposed that the group spend time to share experiences to learn why some countries decided to form particular kinds of groups and what kinds of policy issues those processes are addressing.

Namibia

Dr. Martha Kandawa-Schulz relayed the experience of Namibia. She indicated that when Namibia got funding from UNEP to develop a policy framework, they decided that they did not know enough about what was happening in their country itself. So they developed a country study first and decided to then develop the policy. Upon the study's completion, they started working on the national policy. There was an eight-month debate about whether to call it a biotechnology policy or a biosafety policy, and in the end it was termed a policy "enabling the safe use of biotechnology." The cabinet passed the policy in 1999. After that, there was discussion about which ministry was the competent authority for biosafety issues. It was decided that the Ministry of Science and Technology would be responsible for administering the law. A meeting was planned two weeks after this meeting regarding Namibia's biotechnology strategy and what it should include in terms of content. Based on the points discussed at the meeting, a biotechnology strategy will be drafted and will be linked with the biosafety policy. The public was involved through the use of the biodiversity program, which joins many stakeholders from 13 groups. Following that, workshops were held with smaller groups starting with farmers, scientists, and so on, and then a big workshop was held at the end at which all the stakeholders were together. Groups such as farmers' unions, the meat board, and the agronomic board were brought together separately before being brought together with the larger group, and the topic and goals of the dialogue were conveyed to them before the groups were joined together. The commission includes representatives of the Biotechnology Alliance (which is one of the working groups), government institutions (ministries of the environment, agriculture, fisheries, trade, and health), the private sector, parastatals, the university, and the consumer lobby (which has been active for the last three years).

Kenya

Prof. Norah Olembo spoke about the experience of the biotechnology policy development process in Kenya. She indicated that it has been about 10 years since the process was initiated, when they first heard a lot about biotechnology and its elements and decided that they wanted to use the technology. It soon dawned on them that they needed to have biosafety regulations in place to guide them; therefore, they started the process of forming a policy. The Netherlands gave them money to form a committee of experts, which had a lot of meetings with farmers, scientists, and industrial organizations for an entire year to see what those stakeholders thought of the technology before they embarked upon it. At this point in time, all biotechnology was being considered, not only GMOs. The people asked about the risks and the benefits and decided they wanted to use it. The committee looked into it and gathered literature from various organizations that articulated guiding regulations. The World Bank donated the documents. This material was used as a baseline to develop biosafety rules, which were drawn up under the National Council of Science and Technology as supervised by the Ministry of Science and Technology. The rules were stringent and a bit restrictive, but they worked and have worked ever since. A national committee that is recognized at the government level deals with these applications. There are guidelines as to what is supposed to be asked and questions that come to the committee.

Kenya has now reached the level of field experimentation, and there is insistence that there be a laboratory-experimental stage to test technologies before they go out into the field. A specific laboratory is being built for this purpose. There is also dummy field experimentation, a trial without the GMOs themselves, for the sake of the farmers who want to know whether the technology is safe. Groups have been taken to the field trials from surrounding communities to familiarize themselves with the work, to ask questions, and to better understand how safe it is for them. These types of activities have been ongoing, and one project for insect-resistant maize is already underway in Kenya. The committee has also received an application for *Bt* cotton, which is moving faster. Modifications with carnations and a few other projects are in the pipeline. A new sweet potato came through the system and is still at the lab level, but not yet with the farmers. The trial stage is advanced, but the product is not yet in the field.

Prof. Olembo concluded by noting that the committee felt it was very useful to involve as many stakeholders as possible for acceptance of the technology. She noted that it is also useful to be serious in dealing with an idea and carry it to the end. The committee acknowledged that there were dangers to expect and that they had to put structures in place to address them. She also mentioned a publicity and education exercise in conjunction with the African Biotechnology Stakeholders

Forum, which is involved with the news media and other stakeholders, including parliamentarians.

When asked about the process used to approve applications to conduct GMO trials, Prof. Olembo noted that there are conditions and requirements in the biosafety guidelines that applications have to satisfy before they can move into the trial stage. She noted that the *Bt* maize took three years to go through the process, and that the first application does not necessarily qualify. The committee is in the process of revising the regulations using what they have learned over the past six years of use. Prof. Olembo also indicated that there is one set of guidelines for all activities. Conditions for approval of the application include such things as whether it has been accepted in the country of origin, evidence of risk assessment and experimentation, and proof of where the technology has come from. The guidelines will be different when the technology is created within the country. The committee insists that local institutions have their own biosafety guidelines that feed into the national guidelines. For instance, KARI has a set of biosafety regulations that deal with all the nitty-gritty requirements for food safety, such as how to dispose of materials.

The question of whether the regulations consider consumer health was raised. For example, particularly for *Bt* corn, the country from which the technology comes may not necessarily be a corn-eating country, whereas the country accepting the technology may eat a lot of corn and may not be happy with those regulations. It was asked whether Kenya is undertaking any human or animal safety studies, and it was noted that most of the animal studies done in Germany show no traces of *Bt* in the protein of the animals. Prof. Olembo noted that applications from outside are required to provide evidence of all tests undertaken in the country of origin, but Kenya does not carry out any tests. They have not reached the stage of carrying out experimentation on animals in Kenya itself. Perhaps this will be introduced at the stage of laboratory testing so that researchers can consider the effects that GMOs have on Kenyan animals in lab conditions.

A participant raised the point that although products are now considered safe for the countries of this region if they are considered safe in the country of origin, testing should be based on the particular characteristics of a product rather than the process by which it was created, and products should be evaluated in the context in which they will be used. In this region, that context includes a high rate of morbidity, which affects the absorption of toxins; a high prevalence of HIV, which involves the immune system; and a high rate of malnutrition. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration policy focuses on the U.S. population and is blind to the conditions, diets, and food habits elsewhere that *Bt* products might be used. Because many countries in the region base 50 to 70 percent of their diet on one product,

the population using the product may be totally exposed, and because the product is not extensively used in the country of origin, the risk assessments undertaken in the country of origin may not be sufficient.

Participants discussed the need to make people aware of the implications of adopting biotechnology, which brought them back to the idea of stakeholder involvement. It was noted that if people are serious about food security in Africa, chances must be taken, but in an informed matter. Kenya has undertaken cautious steps over a long period of time because the process needs to begin somewhere if the people are to be convinced that they need the technology and are serious about change.

When asked about who enforces the regulations in Kenya, Prof. Olembo indicated that there is an interdisciplinary committee comprised of many different stakeholders. When an application is submitted, there is initial work to see that all the required papers are there, and if necessary the applicants are asked for more information. Once completed, the application is presented to the committee, which scrutinizes it very closely. The committee has received complaints that the process is taking too long, but it wants to be sure that Kenyans are safe and ready to move on to the next stage.

A participant asked whether Kenya is monitoring at entry points and whether monitoring has been built into the law and, if so, what the institutional framework is. Prof. Olembo acknowledged that monitoring is a difficult thing to do. She noted that people in Kenya are not too worried about seeds coming in through someone's pocket and also that it is very difficult to monitor seeds coming in by way of donations. Should there be testing kits at the entry points to determine whether a product is GM? If any maize or soybean product has been imported from the United States or elsewhere, it will most likely have GM content. It is not easy to say a country is completely free of GMOs. Prof. Olembo indicated that Kenya does not have the capacity for testing incoming foodstuffs.

Participants also discussed the issue of labeling. Prof. Olembo noted that Kenya recently ratified the Cartagena Protocol, which does have guidelines for labeling. This subject will be debated at the national level to see whether it is compulsory to adhere to the guidelines of the protocol. At the moment, food is not labeled on the shelves in Kenya (whether GM or non-GM). Dr. Schulz indicated that Namibia's draft law says that food has to be clearly labeled so at least consumers can see whether it is GM. The law states that if it is a normal GM product, it must go to the registrar, and the ministries are modifying their regulation forms so they can include a GM indication.

Dr. Schulz also pointed out that countries will have to follow labeling procedures at the SADC level and suggested that labeling be coordinated regionally, as

a lot of goods are traded within the region. A participant raised the issue of how decisions are made and how trade-offs are evaluated in terms of trade issues, considering for example whether a country wants to undertake a GMO trial on a good that might contaminate exports to the European Union. Prof. Olembo acknowledged that in Kenya, when it comes to a product that is obviously intended for export, those considerations would have to be taken into account. But with maize it was found that there would be no way that Kenya would be an exporter of maize in the near future. However, she noted that the issue might be more relevant to other products.

SADC Advisory Committee on Biotechnology

Dr. Bernard Luhanga presented information on the creation of the SADC Advisory Committee on Biotechnology. He noted that biotechnology issues were first put on the agenda of the Council of Ministers due to the humanitarian crisis over the past three years. In August 2001 they recognized that there would be a production shortfall within the region, particularly affecting Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, and that this was due mostly to drought and simultaneous flooding, particularly in Malawi, and the lack of regional surpluses at the time. A directive was issued asking that the immediate problem of the humanitarian crisis be addressed, but also that a long-term strategy to deal with the food insecurity situation in the region be developed. When the next food security report was presented in 2002–03, the situation had further deteriorated. Six countries were now affected, and, in terms of human cost, 40 million people were at risk.

A directive called for the ministers of agriculture to meet and come up with a strategy, so there was a special meeting to figure out what to do. Since the region had no surpluses, imports had to come from the outside, and the major donor was the United States, which was obviously giving GM food aid (or maybe it was not, but the food was not labeled one way or another; the expectation in the region was that it was GM), the question arose as to how the SADC should handle the issue of GMOs. Each country has a sovereign right to determine whether to accept GMOs, but if there are transit arrangements, it needs to be discussed with neighbors. Zambia took a stand on GMOs, and other countries' stands became very clear. The ministers wanted to put in place mechanisms of accepting GMOs under certain conditions, and a decision was deliberately taken to look at the need for and potential promise and risks of GMOs. They recommended to the council that an advisory committee on biotechnology be formed.

Dr. Unesu Ushewokunze-Obatolu provided further details about the committee. She indicated that their first meeting had been held the previous week, and they have yet to produce an official record of the proceedings. The advisory

committee was nominated in February; it has a membership of eight and is serviced by the SADC Secretariat, through which it reports to the Council of Ministers. Its mandate is to advise the SADC on all issues having to do with biotechnology and biosafety. Given information from the secretary general of the SADC, the committee's authority enables them to inquire from each country about its progress or any assistance the countries may need from time to time, and also to seek advice about where the committee might get professional advice. Although the committee's members are from different backgrounds and quite diverse, they cannot cater to all relevant areas so they may need to seek outside advice. One committee member is a lawyer who has been exposed to trade/biotechnology/IPR issues.

The terms of reference of the committee have been drafted for their review. It was decided that in order to come up with the best advice, they would look at policies, legislation, and regulations in view of the fact that each country of the SADC region should have legislation in place on biosafety in order to receive or regulate activities on biotechnology by the year 2004. The committee also agreed to look closely at the Africa Union model law that was drafted some years ago and to examine how best to integrate the requirements of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety. The committee will also look at ways of institutionalizing processes that have to do with activities that affect biosafety within the region, encouraging each country to set institutional mechanisms in place. They will also look at the resources available, because that will drive the process. These tasks are additional responsibilities in areas that are already regulated by a number of sectors in each of the different countries. The committee will also look at the information resources that can be used in advising or can be accessed by the various countries at the regional level. They will consider human capacity, and particularly capacity building. Expertise levels are expected to be low, although it is unsure at the moment, before the literature is reviewed. The key question the committee will examine is how to put biotechnology to good use, realizing the comparative advantages between and among the countries and looking at different ways of mobilizing financial resources.

A number of organizations are interested in looking at different aspects of biotechnology, provided the committee can sit down and learn what the priorities are. It was decided to make a strong recommendation that the region itself set out to commit resources before looking elsewhere. The committee also considered the issue of public awareness, particularly that of the region, and agreed it is the small farmer who most needs awareness at this time (this is not to say that it is important only to small farmers; urban areas are also affected).

The committee will maintain oversight of the progress each of the countries will be making over time in developing systems to implement biosafety, in particu-

lar in areas such as knowledge development, research, and capacity building. They have set out to engage in various activities, but have not yet concluded a full plan of action. A meeting will be held in June, but before then it was agreed that they would undertake a number of reviews so the committee will have a baseline set of information about the region in terms of where the region is. And they will take stock of the inventories relating to the various resources already available and identify the gaps that exist so that they can make appropriate recommendations to the sectors. A specific assignment is to look at issues that will impact the design of a SADC regional model. Having been closely associated with the Africa Union (AU) area, a number of members are looking at various issues, such as environmental impact, public health impact, food safety, and consumer concerns. When the committee meets again, they will decide which of these issues can translate into policy instruments.

Participants expressed concern over the 2004 deadline for regulations. In response to a question about whether the committee will do anything to help countries put that administration in place, Dr. Luhanga responded that this issue was of high priority in the action plan during the previous meeting, and members are developing some concepts as to how to approach the issue. One approach is to have each country come up with its own legislation (with input from the legislation of other member states). The options are being put into concept form, and it is hoped that they will be discussed in June or July, at which time member states would be free to choose one. Dr. Luhanga noted that these are national decisions, but definitely the deadline is there. Another participant did not see how the deadline could be met, especially given the lengthy process for advancing draft forms of legislation. It was also asked whether the Council of Ministers has informed countries of ways of acquiring funding to undertake the development of the legislation.

It was pointed out that those involved are confident that funds will be found somewhere, and full information is not available yet. Efforts are already underway in four of the countries who are using UNEP funding. Other donors have expressed interest, but the committee must sit down and decide for exactly what the funds will be used.

The question was raised about what forms of support (not only funding) research institutions like IFPRI could offer. Dr. Ushewokunze-Obatolu noted that there is a lot of experience and expertise on policy development and international debates within IFPRI and other organizations such as the International Service for National Agricultural Research, and the committee is investigating where they can tap into it in certain areas. Dr. Luhanga added that information management is one area in which expertise may be needed. He noted that the committee is now

looking at institutional frameworks, and this assessment, which is very important for the region, is one to which IFPRI may be able to add value.

Concern was raised over certain elements of the AU model law, which would make it difficult for companies to invest in biotechnology because it is totally unattractive to industry. A participant asked if there was room on the committee to involve other stakeholders such as industry. Dr. Luhanga indicated that the AU model is only a reference, not the key document, and that the committee is going to ask for input from all stakeholders. They will be coming up with their own model that reflects what is happening on the ground, which each country can domesticate.

Participants expressed support for the SADC initiative, indicating that the issue of harmonization is key. It was also pointed out that the group should ensure that the dialogue process beginning with this meeting should complement the national and regional processes already underway.

Day 1 Closing Remarks

The Chair asked Dr. von Braun to make some closing remarks at the end of the first day. Dr. von Braun noted that the process started is extremely useful and should continue as a quasi-independent, not mainly government-driven, process of dialogue. He also suggested that the group stick to the term *dialogue* and not use *negotiation*, as he felt the word *negotiation* was a bit too heavy and too loaded.

Dr. von Braun also suggested that this process continue as one that is driven by a set of international and regional organizations that are partially independent of government-driven processes. He proposed that FANRPAN, IFPRI, and NEPAD be umbrella organizations for this process, but said that every voice at the table should count. The process should be one that remains as open and broad-ranging as it is today, and should probably be even broader in terms of participants. Consumer groups, farmer groups, and people engaged in trade and food industries who are part of the decisionmaking, agenda-setting communities should be added in future meetings.

Dr. von Braun proposed that some sort of a working group or committee with which the group around the table would be comfortable grow out of the dialogue. The committee could continue the work between meetings and would have no more than five or seven people. He suggested that by the conclusion of the second day of the meeting the group create such a working committee to move the process forward, synthesize the agenda of the dialogue, and aggregate the conclusions of this meeting. The committee could take on initiatives such as e-mail dialogues and liaise with other groups engaged in activities of the same nature in the region.

Dr. von Braun also commended the Chair, Dr. Mugabe, and suggested that he be asked to chair this committee.

Dr. von Braun also noted that the group would have to explain to the rest of the world why it is undertaking this dialogue, and perhaps that should be further reflected upon in the coming discussions. Although there are stakeholder dialogues driven by governments, international finance, UN organizations (with intergovernmental characteristics), or foundations (which are more or less close to industry groups), what is missing from this mix of dialogues is exactly the type of exercise conducted at this meeting. Dr. von Braun suggested that the exercise be carried on, with a sunset clause to the effect that it should reassess itself at the end of 2004. He noted that the committee should be entrusted with identifying a few milestones, such as when to deliver what, so that progress can be measured. Dr. von Braun concluded by noting that his suggestions are preliminary and should be further discussed.

The Chair closed the day's proceedings, thanking the speakers for their presentations and participants for their discussion.

DAY 2

Introduction to Day 2 (Dr. John Mugabe, Moderator)

Dr. Mugabe opened Day 2 by reminding participants of the issues that were raised during the first day's discussions. He raised the following topics:

- The appropriate subjects of debate. In terms of policy issues, discussions were guided by the first presentation, which indicated that a number of African countries are in fact embracing biotechnology, although they are currently at different stages of biotechnology. The debate should not be on whether these countries should be investing in biotechnology, but on how these countries can maximize benefits and minimize risks through the development of biotechnology.
- The formulation of biosafety policies and frameworks regarding the use of these technologies. Drafts and legislation are currently being developed.
- The need to harmonize policies, given transboundary and trade issues.
- Trade liberalization and its implications vis-à-vis the regulation of GM food. In terms of information and experiences, this is one area in which more research and analysis are needed. Many of the countries in the region may be

confronted with conflicts between their efforts to liberalize their economies and those to develop and use biotechnology. In broad terms, the WTO and biosafety frameworks need to be examined to find out how the two can evolve at the domestic level.

- Expansion of the knowledge base regarding the implications of research and development on biotechnology and distribution of the benefits of the technology.
- The sharing of best practices for assessment on the national level.
- Issues involving the costs and benefits (particularly economic) of biotechnology. Although they were not discussed, these issues were flagged in the background papers, and they should be conveyed to policymakers.
- The importance of ensuring that the introduction of biotechnology does not in any way undermine local, indigenous technology.
- The need to build a platform or platforms for dialogue and, where possible, consensus building, on the range of unresolved issues. Such platform(s) may facilitate interactions between ongoing national and subregional efforts. From the discussions it was clear that at the national and the regional levels there are some policy processes that may generate consensus, but most of these processes are those of governmental committees, with an emphasis on risk assessment. In those processes less emphasis is placed on some of the issues discussed in this dialogue, such as intellectual property regimes.
- Inclusion in the debate of those groups that are not participating.
- The establishment by an institution such as IFPRI, together with others, of a small committee that will be tasked with guiding the regional dialogue. The process may not necessarily aim at consensus building but rather at awareness, interaction, and exchange of information, and perhaps at influencing particular policies.

Dr. Mugabe then asked participants to consider several questions as the dialogue process moves forward:

- What would the mandate or role of a committee be? The general role would be to facilitate the dialogue process, but what would the specific roles be?

- What issues should be high on the agenda of the committee for discussion at the regional policy dialogues?
- How would the committee be composed? The first impression is that IFPRI and others would be conveners of this committee, but the members would be from this group and also drawn from others. How would we accept and guide the membership of the committee?
- How would this dialogue relate to other stakeholder processes?
- To whom would the committee report? Would it report to the broader constituents? Would all of the minutes/reports be accessible to all stakeholders?
- How long should the committee be in place? Should it be open-ended?
- Are there any key policy arenas that this dialogue or process should seek to influence, at least in the short term? For instance, those of NEPAD, the SADC, the WTO, the FAO? Where do we find the policy champions? The dialogue needs to identify policy arenas so that it can make an impact on policy, and this must be kept in mind in terms of the processes the group wants to influence in the short and medium terms.

Priority Policy Issues

The group discussed and agreed upon the following list of priority policy issues that could potentially be explored by the policy dialogue. The dimensions of each issue were then considered and adapted to form the two tables that follow (Tables A.1 and A.2). However, it should be kept in mind that although it may be helpful to frame the issues in the two tables, not all of the topics are included in the tables.

Table A.1 Emerging priority policy issues

Clustered activities	Clustered policy issues			
	Biosafety	Intellectual property protection	Trade	Technology development and transfer
Information gathering, exchange, and analysis				
Capacity building/infrastructure				
Harmonization				
Cooperation/collaboration				

Table A.2 Biotechnology development for food security

Food security needs addressed by biotechnology	Technology development strategies		
	Research	Technological development	Technology transfer/diffusion
Drought			
Soil fertility			
Malnutrition			
Pests and diseases			

The priority issues identified as follows will be used as a provisional list for the committee to consider for future dialogues.

- Biosafety policies and frameworks
- Harmonization
- Trade issues
- Intellectual property rights
- Risk assessment
- Economic costs and benefits
- Local technology
- Links to national/regional development strategies
- Biotechnology and food security
- Development of biotechnology strategy (proactive vs. reactive)
- Seed (access, availability, policies, trade)
- Access to germ plasm
- Liability and redress (public and private)
- Protection and conservation of biodiversity

- Public- and private-sector roles
- The policy formulation process

Various points were raised during the development of the list of priority policy issues, including these:

- The way in which the policy dialogue relates to and feeds into existing processes, such as those of the SADC Advisory Committee on Biotechnology, should be kept in mind. The dialogue should feed into that committee and follow up on the progress of the committee.
- The issues of seed industries and seed production should be considered. The Rockefeller Foundation has funding in technology transfer and is trying to facilitate the development of patenting rights to move some materials that are not necessarily commercially viable for a commercial seed company to produce.
- Issues of intellectual property rights include how to ensure that technologies are protected and made available to those that require them and also how to provide information on the range of technology through the use of domestic databases.
- That the dialogue should provide feedback to research organizations in the region and internationally should be one of its core principles. There are large knowledge/research gaps related to biosafety; for instance, (1) there is practically no understanding of the relationships between *Bt* GM crops and soils (the basic research has not been done, though soil scientists say it is very important) and (2) there has been practically no basic research on the whole range of food safety concerns that are laid out in the background paper of David Pelletier (these concerns relate to the use of GMOs under the African conditions of the vulnerable health status of populations and the very large shares of their diets from single commodities, such as corn).
- One of the most pressing issues of the dialogue should be biotechnology vis-à-vis food security needs in southern Africa. What is the contribution from all this investment in policy and regulation, and is it really addressing food security? Cotton is not going to address food security needs. Investments need to be considered in the context of national agricultural development plans.

- Promoting the harmonization of trade policy, food safety, capacity building, strategies, and so forth should be considered a core objective of the dialogue.
- It is important that the region engage in a dialogue about the incentives of the region to create its own capacities for biotechnology. Should there mainly be dialogues on biotechnologies that are reactionary (as the rest of the world invests in biotechnology and southern Africa picks and chooses)? Or should there be a policy strategy that puts the subregion itself in the driver's seat in formulating biotechnologies for subsistence farmers, which relate to agro-ecologies and drought problems, or biotechnologies for consumer health or for HIV/AIDS-burdened areas with certain micronutrient deficiencies? Perhaps both reactionary and active policies should be considered.
- The dialogue should deal not only with science issues, but also with health and safety within the national and regional strategies. A number of subregional and regional strategies have been very exclusive, and the goal should be to create a dialogue that would allow as many stakeholders as possible to feed into the process of developing a strategy. The dialogue could feed into the identification of the key target areas for influencing national and regional activities, such as the NEPAD suggestion of an African biotechnology strategy.
- These questions need to be addressed: What policy arenas should be targeted, and what is the timeline? When will African governments be making certain decisions, and how can the process of dialogue be benchmarked?
- The two key issues that require urgent action by policymakers are trade and intellectual property rights. Two other key issues are the development of biotechnology products in Africa for smallholder farmers and the development of biotechnology products for vulnerable consumers. These issues require research, investment, and capacity building. A sense of the urgency of the policy priority-setting scheme should be introduced. Because of the state of development of such technologies and the need to understand the human and biosafety issues, there is a different time dimension.
- Whether the dialogue itself should engage in or simply exchange information on public awareness activities and acceptance was widely debated. It was noted that singling out public awareness puts the policy dialogue in an advocacy role and undermines its credibility. On the other hand, it was suggested that the dialogue could exchange information on and scrutinize what countries are doing in terms of public awareness activities.

- Information and best practices should be shared on public mobilization and participation.
- The process of policy formulation should be studied. The University of Sussex Institute for Development Studies has been examining biotechnology policy processes in two countries in Africa (Kenya and Zimbabwe), and it has been suggested that another study look at other recent cases, particularly the decision-making process involved in bringing about a particular GMO policy. The dialogue can look at these kinds of studies and can synthesize information and draw lessons from them.
- Given that there were 52 meetings on biotechnology in Africa last year and a lot of information gathering is already being undertaken, the value added by the dialogue could be analysis.
- Regarding the seed issue, a parallel exercise is being undertaken by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, ICRISAT, and the SADC Seed Network, which are looking at all of the seed issues, including biotechnology aspects.

It was acknowledged that the master list of priority policy issues would be considered a living document that the group could continue to put together.

Biosafety Issues

The group focused on one line item of the list of priority policy issues, that of biosafety policy and frameworks, as an example of the types of specific issues that might be addressed by dialogues on this topic. The group developed the following list of issues related to biosafety:

- Efforts to promote sharing of information and experiences, including capacity building
- The issues not yet covered, including consumer rights and safety
- Building bridges at national and subregional levels (in the areas of trade, health, environment, agriculture)
- The need for harmonization regarding trade issues
- Providing feedback to research organizations in the region and internationally

The urgency of the development of a biosafety policy was discussed. A participant noted that it is important to have biosafety guidelines, because it is advantageous to be able to use them at any time. However, it was also noted that there is a dilemma in that trade policies enforce urgency. If a country wants to trade, it has to adopt a policy immediately about whether it will accept GMOs and under what conditions. If a country is concerned about production safety and environmental safety, it must be aware that ecologies are as complex as economies, and the research agenda is so huge that it could take decades. Biosafety regulations currently focus on environmental safety; however, consumer benefits, safety, and well-being need to be further examined. A sense of urgency also arises when one considers the potential of biotechnologies to offer opportunities for improving nutrition. The current biotechnology generation focuses on the content of the product and no longer on the production characteristics only. If there are not proper biosafety and human health policies on the table, countries have no incentive to develop the technologies. Southern Africa needs to be able to trade in food and agricultural commodities inside and outside the region and therefore needs to urgently implement biosafety policies. However, there also needs to be an increased concern for people's health and food security, which also requires a sense of urgency.

It was also suggested that the process of developing biosafety policies be built into national and regional development frameworks and located within NEPAD. The dialogue should engage those other than scientists and should link with poverty eradication strategies.

A participant relayed the experience of Tanzania, which has an advanced biosafety draft document that they are hesitant to use even on an interim basis. Multinational companies using GM tobacco and other companies are putting pressure on Tanzania to accept GM products. Because regulations are not yet in place, Tanzania is not interested in accepting GM seeds. The participant stressed the need to consider facilitating the movement of GM seeds or foods. Do we want to deliver seeds or foodstuffs to people who are starving? Foodstuffs would be relevant, but seeds may be more dangerous and should be further examined. He asked why, considering the prevalence of hunger, Tanzania should not import these foodstuffs instead of letting people die. However, the participant closed by noting that we are unsure whether these foodstuffs are really good for human health.

The Chair closed the session on biosafety by noting that there was consensus on the biosafety issues that need to be taken on by the policy dialogue platform, among them information sharing, best practices, food aid, consumer rights and safety, and trade. The committee should be given the mandate to think about what other issues might be addressed under the aegis of biosafety.

Committee Mandate, Role, and Composition

Dr. Mugabe opened this session by asking the participants to consider the suggestion that a small committee be established to facilitate the regional policy dialogue and lead the process that will enable countries to ultimately develop a strategy on biotechnology for food security. It is envisioned that the committee would build bridges and engage the subregional platforms in dialogue.

Regional Scope

Participants considered the regional scope of the dialogue. Dr. von Braun asked whether it might be useful to go beyond a focus on southern Africa to a sub-Saharan or all-African perspective. In response, participants agreed that it is better to start small as a subregional exercise, with a focus on SADC countries, and then revisit. It was acknowledged that there is a trade-off between scope and depth, and it was suggested that extra resource persons from other subregions be brought into the dialogues for exchange of valuable experiences. It was noted that it would be helpful to expand future dialogues in order to feed into the NEPAD strategy.

Links with Other Initiatives

In response to a question about how the dialogue would be seen by NEPAD, Dr. Mugabe noted that NEPAD works with the subregional economic groups, so there is flexibility based on needs, although what has been stressed thus far is an Africa-wide forum for biotechnology. FARA has approached NEPAD, and discussions are taking place about whether there is scope for a subregional foundation to have a regionwide discussion on biotechnology.

It was also suggested that the committee facilitate linkages with other ongoing activities, such as those of the SADC Advisory Committee on Biotechnology, and that it make informed judgments about the dynamics of these processes and see how a dialogue of this nature could feed into other processes. Participants agreed on an active marketing strategy for the services the dialogue could provide. In other words, members of the committee would not necessarily be held captive to speak on behalf of the group, but they could enter into relationships with other stakeholders and indicate when it would be helpful for an issue to be entered into the next phase of the dialogue. Committee members could disseminate information about the potentials of the dialogue process, which can play the role of overcoming gridlocks in government debates and in debates between nongovernmental and industry circles.

Dialogue vs. Advisory Role

Participants debated the question of whether the role of the dialogue and committee is only to engage in dialogue or also to give advice on policy formulation. It

was agreed that the committee is not an advisory committee; it is not making policy but making a link between the policymaking process and multistakeholder dialogue to inform particular policies. The dialogue was considered one step before an advisory body, where conflict is unresolved and where the process of dialogue can make a key contribution. The dialogues may identify recommendations and priority areas, and the committee should be seen as a supplier of that information to the decisionmakers.

Reporting/Coordination

It was agreed that the committee is accountable to the stakeholders. The reports of dialogues and syntheses generated by the committee would be distributed to all stakeholders. In a technical sense, the committee would be accountable to the three core sponsoring organizations—FANRPAN, IFPRI, and NEPAD—but these three organizations would not exercise any censorship of the outcomes of committee deliberations, nor would there be an approval process. The committee's mandate would include complete freedom to dialogue and liaise with other organizations.

Committee Mandate

Participants agreed that the committee would prepare the next dialogues, which would include (a) reviewing the initial proposal in which FANRPAN and IFPRI suggested beginning with a sequence of three dialogues, (b) determining which issues would receive priority and what aspects of those issues should be discussed in the dialogues (using the list of the priority policy issues identified by the group as well as the two tables as a framework), (c) considering whether to restrict a particular session to one stakeholder group only (i.e., parliamentarians) or whether the session should be open, (d) facilitating the commissioning of working papers on key issues around the dialogues, and (e) considering the range of key policy initiatives into which the dialogues should feed and developing a time frame.

It was also agreed that the committee would synthesize and disseminate results from dialogues, liaise with other stakeholders in other policy decisionmaking forums, and review and clarify the draft mandate, which would include the following charges:

- To maintain a regional scope, starting subregionally
- To prepare the next dialogues
- To facilitate linkages with other ongoing activities

- To synthesize and disseminate the results of dialogues

The name of the committee was left undecided for further consideration.

Nomination Criteria

Participants agreed that the committee would elect its own chair, despite the earlier proposal that Dr. Mugabe chair the committee. There was debate about whether the committee itself should have a multistakeholder membership, and it was agreed that while the committee should reflect the multistakeholder outlook of the dialogue, members would not be serving on the committee as representatives of stakeholder groups so not all groups need be represented. It was suggested that committee members in principle promote and protect the objectives of the multistakeholder dialogue (rather than their own personal viewpoints). It was agreed that individuals sit on the committee in their personal capacities.

So the committee will have the appropriate expertise or other qualities, it was also suggested that the committee members include (a) people with networking capability in the region, (b) people with experience in policy issues in the region, (c) people who are in touch with farmers and NGO groups, and (d) scientists from universities or other areas. On the other hand, it was also stated that the selection of the committee should not be restricted to such criteria, but focus more on whether the committee members can work well together and carry the process forward.

It was agreed that there would be three ex-officio members of the committee (representing the three umbrella organizations—FANRPAN, IFPRI, and NEPAD), one representative from the SADC Advisory Committee on Biotechnology, and five other members, for a maximum of nine persons presiding on the committee. It was also agreed that at least two of the five non-ex-officio members should be women.

Timeline/Benchmarks

The Chair asked participants to consider any key policy processes or key events into which the dialogue should feed. It was noted that IFPRI is planning a major conference in April 2004 on food and nutrition security in Africa, to which President Museveni would be invited. It was suggested that there might be an opportunity to link this conference with another round of the stakeholder dialogue on biotechnology. The August meeting of the ministers of agriculture was mentioned, and the group recommended preparing some informational materials to inform them about the multistakeholder dialogue initiative.

In terms of milestones, it was recommended that the committee prepare at least two more successful multistakeholder dialogues to influence the priority-

setting and decisionmaking processes, one to be held in the next 6 months and the next in the 12 months thereafter. If that is not done successfully, the process can be gracefully closed in an e-mail consultation. It was noted that it will not be a failure if the institution is closed. It may even be closed if it is very successful over the next two years. The objective is not longevity, but an intensive, effective, and means-tested process, which will also be much more convincing to any potential donors. It was agreed that there should not be any predetermined outcomes for the committee, but an emphasis on making an impact where there are opportunities.

It was also suggested that the committee be entrusted to establish self-evaluation criteria and milestones. So that the committee will not serve in isolation, it was proposed that the committee set up an e-mail platform so that e-mails can be sent into a receiving pool for the committee and they can selectively answer and respond in an easy way.

Another suggestion was for the committee to oversee a preassessment of the dialogue participants' views of biotechnology, which can be revisited two years later to see if the dialogue had an impact on their views. The information could also be used as a baseline for the next dialogue to show where the group stands on certain issues. It was recommended that Dr. David Pelletier, the participant who made the suggestion, develop a questionnaire of three to five questions to which the group could respond. It was agreed that the next dialogue would have a self-assessment mechanism.

Closing Remarks

The Chair invited Dr. Takavarasha and Dr. von Braun to make a few closing remarks. The following paragraphs record what they said.

Dr. Tobias Takavarasha, FANRPAN

I would like to thank the moderator, and am grateful for the partnership between IFPRI and FANRPAN as part of a process of contributing to dialogue, debate, and advice on key policy issues. We hope to be able to forward the contributions and advice of this dialogue directly to the SADC committee or other key stakeholders.

FANRPAN is happy to give this support. The network is going through a consolidation process to continue to be well positioned to give the kind of assistance that is needed in the region—simply bridging the gap. The potential and the need for policy advice in the region are very clear to everyone, and there is a need for institutional resources, human resource support, and capacity for policy analysis.

It is hoped that the working papers prepared for this dialogue will go through a peer review process and will be published in some format. We also plan to have a short synthesis that will be circulated in the regular policy briefs of FANRPAN.

FANRPAN is also hoping to convene or be part of a meeting of permanent secretaries in the region so they can talk about key issues in the region. With that in mind, FANRPAN will continue to contact the participants in this dialogue and work with IFPRI on how to build the capacity of FANRPAN to continue to support the activities that we have undertaken.

Prof. Joachim von Braun, IFPRI

This dialogue has exceeded my expectations. I see much more clearly the potentials of multistakeholder dialogues after this experience. There were excellent dynamics over the last two days. Information was exchanged on the ongoing activities in the SADC region on biotechnology strategies and the complex issues involved in formulating and implementing biosafety policies. This meeting has made a contribution to making complex political processes better informed. I also learned a lot for other regions in the world, and at some point, maybe in two years, if this process is successful, we should compare notes on how these types of dialogues function in different parts of the world and in different cultures.

IFPRI is delighted to begin this work with FANRPAN and to do so only half a year after having signed a joint memorandum of agreement. We are equally delighted that we have expanded this to a trilateral institutional relationship between FANRPAN, IFPRI, and NEPAD on biotechnology dialogues.

IFPRI positioned itself as a facilitator, bringing knowledge from other parts of the world. I acknowledge gratefully the willingness of participants to engage at this table, due to the leadership of Dr. Mugabe but also the willingness of participants. The debates that continued over coffee and lunch breaks were a clear sign of the strong demand and need for these dialogues. The willingness of members to serve on the committee was also a strong sign of participants' willingness to engage.

This meeting will be properly documented, and I thank those who contributed behind the scenes. I would also like to highlight and specially commend Were Omamo, who cannot be with us here, as he has worked together with a team at IFPRI and FANRPAN since January to make this workshop happen.

I thank Dr. Takavarasha and Dr. Mugabe for their leadership. The meeting is formally closed.