

81ST PLENARY MEETING

# MUMBAI, INDIA

2-5 December 2023

Cotton Value Chain:  
“Local Innovations for Global Prosperity”



## MINUTES

### Inaugural Plenary Session SATURDAY, 2 DECEMBER, 14:00 TO 15:30

Chair: Mr Piyush Goyal, Minister of Textiles, Commerce & Industry and Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Government of India

The session commenced at 15:00.

Ms Roop Rashi, Textile Commissioner, Chairperson of the Organizing Committee, provided a welcome address.

Introductory remarks were made by Ms Rachna Shah, Secretary, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

With no objections, the Chair approved the agenda.

Mr Eric Trachtenberg delivered the report of the Executive Director. He reiterated the ICAC's commitment to its mission — to serve the cotton and textile community through promotion, knowledge sharing, innovation, partnerships, and providing a forum for discussion of cotton issues of international significance — and highlighted the ICAC's core competencies: data and publications; committees that focus on issues such as instrument testing and sustainability; and making contributions to initiatives such as the Research Associates Program and the World Cotton Research Conference. The recently formed Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC) in 2021 was evidence of the ICAC's desire to engage with organisations from every sector of the value chain, and that the committee would be speaking later in the conference about private sector recommendations for traceability legislation. He added that in the future, the ICAC will expand its focus to include agricultural development, sustainability, textiles, and global cotton promotion. Specifically, he pointed to the success of World Cotton Day, a global celebration of cotton held on 7 October of each year, and the need to continue fighting against the myths about cotton that hurt its competitiveness. On the textiles side, he said the hiring of Mr Kanwar Usman as the first-ever Head of Textiles showed the ICAC's commitment to supporting the entire cotton textile value chain, from seed through

retailers' shelves. He welcomed Brazil, Cameroon, and Kenya back into the ICAC fold, and expressed his eagerness to address the multiple challenges cotton faces in the near future, including climate change, rampant poverty in developing countries, and declining market share vs synthetic fibres.

ICAC Standing Committee Chair, HEM Aly Toure, was unable to be present to deliver the report of the Chairman of the ICAC Standing Committee; the speech was delivered by Mr Patrick Packnett, Acting Standing Committee Chair during the Plenary Meeting. He welcomed all attendees and congratulated the local Organising Committee for their hard work, and also thanked Ambassador Toure for his efforts over the past year as he travelled to multiple countries to encourage them to join the ICAC. He pointed out that it had been a challenging year, but was pleased by several developments, including the hiring of new Executive Director Eric Trachtenberg, and the fact that three countries have re-joined the ICAC: Brazil, Cameroon, and Kenya.

Mr Allan Williams, Chair of the Social, Environmental and Economic Performance of Cotton Production (SEEP), pointed out that brands and retailers are determined to demonstrate their sustainable sourcing credentials. One of the biggest challenges to achieving that goal is the fact that there is no agreed-upon definition of what sustainable means. He also discussed 22 practices that have generally been accepted as regenerative, and said the next step is assessing how feasible it is to implement those practices across the 12 different farm types, which are grouped by factors such as size, access to water, and degree of mechanisation.

CSITC Chair Dr Marinus (René) van der Sluijs, Chair of ICAC- Commercial Standardization of Instrument Testing of Cotton (CSITC), pointed out that the CSITC was celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> year of its existence, and that the challenge it faces is getting more laboratories to participate in Round Trials. He added that only a small percentage of participants were spinners, so the committee would focus on adding more participants from the sector. Finally, he pointed out that the more accurate testing is, the more it ensures that farmers are rewarded for the quality of the fibre they produce.

Peter Wakefield, Chair of the Private Sector Advisory Council (PSAC), provided an update on the committee's activities, saying the committee spent time looking at traceability regulations and potential solutions and regulations surrounding the prohibition of forced labour and of due diligence. He said further details will be provided in the PSAC presentation, 'Private Sector Recommendations for Policy Making on Traceability', scheduled for the next day.

Dr Mohamed Negm, Chair of ICAC-International Cotton Researchers Association (ICRA), explained that ICRA was created to compensate for the lack of research specific to cotton and that it works to promote interaction between cotton scientists around the world. He announced that the 8<sup>th</sup> World Cotton Research Conference, WCRC-8, would be held in Uzbekistan from 7-11 October 2024. ICRA also is launching an initiative to promote the exchange of information on existing germplasm collections because international

cooperation is the key to achieving a more comprehensive assessment of existing germplasm.

Dr Mike Bange, Commercial Research Manager of CSD in Australia, was recognised as the 2023 ICAC Researcher of the Year by Mr Piyush Goyal. Dr Bange thanked the ICAC for the recognition, and all who have provided him with research support.

Mr Piyush Goyal, Union Minister of Textiles, Commerce & Industry and Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, commemorated the release of a postal stamp for Kasturi Cotton Bharat, a newly branded Indian cotton. Mr Goyal pointed out that Mumbai is considered the centre of India's cotton and textile industry due to its favourable climate, convenient logistics, and proximity to raw materials — so much so that Mumbai is often referred to as 'The Manchester of the East'. India's goal was to become the world's largest cotton producer and emphasised the country's dedication to increasing the country's lagging yields. He announced that after speaking with the Ministries of Textiles and Consumer Affairs, he was targeting 16 December as the date for approval of a series of testing laboratories across the country, representing an investment of approximately \$7 million. Finally, he invited everyone to return to India from 26-29 February 2024 to attend the Bharat Tex 2024 event, which would be the world's premier textile fair, reflecting the rich tradition of handmade products from India.

The session concluded at 16:30.

### **Summary Paragraph:**

The International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) met in Mumbai, India, between 2-5 December 2023 for its 81<sup>st</sup> Plenary Meeting since the establishment of the committee in 1939. The meeting was attended by 460 persons including representatives from 15 Member governments, nine international organisations and seven non-member countries.