

# The ICAC's 80th Plenary Meeting



## 80<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting – Virtual

### MINUTES

#### Inaugural Session

Schedule: 08:00 am – 09:15 (GMT-5), Tuesday 29 November 2022

Chairman: Mr Patrick Packnett, USA, ICAC Chairman of the Standing Committee

Mr Kai Hughes, ICAC Executive Director, welcomed all the delegates and the participants to the 80<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting. He shared some housekeeping guidelines and welcomed Mr Patrick Packnett, the Chair of the Standing Committee, to lead the session.

Mr Patrick Packnett, Chair of the ICAC Standing Committee, opened the proceedings of the 80<sup>th</sup> virtual Plenary Meeting of the International Cotton Advisory Committee by welcoming the delegates, participants and guests and put the agenda forward for formal approval.

The delegate from EU had a concern on an issue concerning the Steering Committee agenda and inquired if she should bring it up at this point or at the date of the Steering Committee Session. The chairman said that the matter to be brought up at the Steering Committee session scheduled for Thursday 1 December 2022. With being no other issue raised, the agenda was approved.

Mr Packnett delivered his inaugural speech by sharing an history on how the ICAC had come into being 83 years ago. He appreciated the fact that ICAC operations have gone back to normal and that ICAC Secretariat has been on the ground in many countries executing the ICAC mandate. He noted that the challenges facing the cotton economy have evolved since the creation of the ICAC many years ago and that the organisation is evolving to address these challenges. He identified climate change as the number one challenge the globe is facing currently and highlighted the innovations and technology that the ICAC had adopted to address some of these challenges and help spread best practices. He reiterated importance of World Cotton Day and the role it has played in highlighting the virtues and importance of cotton to the livelihoods of millions of people in the world. The Chair praised the new dynamic Data Dashboard developed by the ICAC Secretariat that offers powerful tools to clearly visualise and analyse data thus providing better insights into global cotton situations for Member governments and other stakeholders. Of particular importance was the creation of the Private Sector Advisory Council which has representation from all the sectors in the value chain making it easy to address the challenges each is facing. He thanked the Standing Committee members and the ICAC Secretariat for their dedicated service to the organisation.

#### Report of the Executive Director by Mr Kai Hughes

Mr Hughes highlighted the need to evaluate and take stock of events at the end of every year, determining performance and identifying areas of improvement going forward according to the Strategic Plan. After taking the leadership of ICAC five years ago, Mr Hughes has put measures in

place to change the organisation's culture to reflect one of dynamism and innovation as one of the key points of his tenure. He observed that the mission of the ICAC is to serve the cotton and textile communities and that for the last three years the focus has been on the promotion of knowledge sharing, innovation, partnerships and providing a forum for discussions of sector matters. Mr Hughes recognised the fact that the textile sectors are where more jobs and wealth are created hence the decision to recruit its first ever ICAC's Head of Textile last year.

Mr Hughes reported that in order to increase demand for cotton, counter the myths and negativity surrounding cotton and fight for market share with synthetic fibres, the ICAC has created a series of videos called 'Truth About Cotton' and developed the idea of World Cotton Day. He reported that World Cotton Day was launched in 2019 with ICAC's partners — WTO, ITC, UNCTAD and FAO — and that in 2021, World Cotton Day was added to the United Nations permanent calendar. He further highlighted the initiatives the Secretariat has undertaken to help member countries address their production challenges such as the Four Simple Steps to Sustainable Cotton programme, which was designed to help small scale farmers double their yields within 3-5 years, and a farmer training programme supported by GIZ, ITC and EU. He further reported that ICAC's Data Scientist, Mr Mathew Looney, had created a platform that allows users to interact with data to get insights and intelligence and that the platform will be available to the general public, but more powerful applications will be limited to ICAC Member governments. He also reported that to back up its training programme, the ICAC launched two innovations: virtual reality training and an interactive soil & plant health app (the ICAC Cotton Expert).

Mr Hughes recognised Cotton Incorporated as a funding partner for the Soil and Plant Health App and also CIRAD and Cotton Connect as key partners in some of the projects the ICAC is developing. He also recognised implementing partners like African Cotton Foundation (ACF), Cotton Development Trust – Zambia (CDT) and the Cotton Board of Zambia (ZCGA). He informed the Plenary Meeting that the PSAC was as an evolution of the former Private Sector Advisory Panel to the PSAC, which brings experts from all sectors of the supply chain together to discuss challenges facing the sector and find common solutions. Mr Hughes reiterated the potential of the PSAC and that with more than 60 organisations coming together to address the challenges of the cotton Sector there is a need for PSAC to be part of ICAC's Plenary Meetings. He acknowledged the role Mr Peter Wakefield, PSAC Chair, and Ms Parkhi Vats, ICAC Commodity Trade Analyst, played in the establishment of PSAC and its various committees.

Mr Hughes announced that next year's plenary meeting will revert to being a face-to-face meeting.

### **Recognition of the ICAC Researchers of the Year, 2022**

Each year, the International Cotton Advisory Committee recognises cotton researchers from across the globe for their significant contributions in cotton research. Dr Jodi Scheffler was declared the ICAC Researcher of the Year 2022, becoming the 16<sup>th</sup> winner and the first woman to ever win the award.

Dr Scheffler then made a virtual acceptance speech and the session ended.