79th Plenary Meeting – Virtual

MINUTES

Inaugural Plenary Session

08:00 am to 9:40 (GMT-5), Monday 6 December 2021
Chairman: Mr. Anshul Sharma

Mr Anshul Sharma, Chairman of the ICAC Standing Committee, opened the proceedings of the first day of the virtual 79th Plenary session of the International Cotton Advisory Committee by delivering his inaugural address. In that address he recognized the work the ICAC had carried out during the year and especially highlighted the innovative projects initiated by the ICAC, despite the pandemic.

The agenda was then put forward for formal approval.

The delegate from Pakistan requested that germplasm exchange should be added to the agenda. The Secretary General, Mr Kai Hughes noted the suggestion and proposed that this should be discussed as a subject for a future Plenary meeting.

The agenda of the plenary session was approved.

This was followed by the address by Mr Kai Hughes, ICAC Executive Director.

Mr Hughes highlighted how Covid-19 had been a catalyst for change and innovation within the ICAC. In particular he noted that the various projects the ICAC had been able to attract over $2.6m in funding for over the past couple of years and the formation of the Private Sector Advisory Council which will bring together private sector associations from throughout the whole of the cotton supply chain.

Looking ahead, he highlighted a new initiative that the ICAC had developed along with CIRAD and the African Cotton Foundation. The African Cotton Sustainability Programme 2030 is a holistic, pan African initiative which has the potential to transform African economies, increasing cotton yields and value addition leading to increases in GDP and employment - by 6 million in West Africa alone. The Executive Director called upon African governments countries to sign up to participate in the programme and assist the ICAC in securing funding for it.

He also pointed out that the ICAC has probably had its busiest year to date and despite Covid, managed to achieve more than 80% of the objectives in the ICAC’s Strategic Plan. He also mentioned the renewed strength of the cotton team with the recruitment of several new and key members of Secretariat. The additions of Mr Kanwar Usman as Head of Textiles; Mr Mathew
Looney as Data Scientist; Ms Parkhi Vats as Commodity Trade Analyst; and Mrs Alex Preston as ICAC Accountant, have increased the capabilities of the ICAC and thus the value it provides to its members.

Recognition of the ICAC Researchers of the Year, 2020 and 2021 and Presentations.

The International Cotton Advisory Committee recognizes annually, cotton researchers from across the globe, for their significant contributions in cotton research. Dr. K. Raja Reddy was declared the ICAC Researcher of the Year 2020 for his outstanding research on the impact of climate change on cotton. Dr. Bruce Tabashnik and Dr. Jonathan Wendel were declared joint winners in the year 2021 for their outstanding work on insect resistance to biotech cotton and evolution of cotton genomes respectively. The winners made a crisp and lucid virtual presentation on their achievements.

Speeches from the ICAC panels and Committees.

- **Private Sector Advisory Council – PSAC**

Mr. Peter Wakefield, Chair, Private Sector Advisory Panel informed the participants that the Standing Committee had the formation of the Private Sector Advisory Council – the PSAC – and its membership is currently being finalized. Two subcommittees- on cotton promotion and on membership and structure were active in their specific areas. The sub-committee on Cotton Promotion ensured that there was a successful World Cotton Day on 7 October when the United Nations approved a resolution submitted by the Cotton-Four countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, and Mali) plus Cote d'Ivoire, requesting that 7 October be reserved for World Cotton Day on its permanent calendar. The sub-committee on membership and structure spent much of its effort on the plan to re-organize the PSAP into the PSAC, which involved changing from an individual-based membership to an organization-based structure, that allows only regional, national, and international organizations to be members.

Mr. Wakefield confirmed that the PSAC would include representation from producers and ginners; merchants and cotton-related activities; spinners, weavers, and machinery manufacturers; and brands and retailers thus involving all sectors of the cotton supply chain. Each sector would have a Chair, plus two additional members on an Executive Committee, that would be responsible for coordination of topics between the stakeholders and the member Governments.

- **International Cotton Researchers Association, ICRA**

Dr Mohamed Negm, Chair of ICRA, presented the activities of the ICRA executive committee. He informed those present that ICRA and ICAC would closely interact to organize the World Cotton Research Conference (WCRC 7) to be held in Egypt from 3-7 Oct 2022. Dr. Negm sought support from the private sector to strengthen the participation of researchers in global cotton meetings, especially the world cotton research conferences. He said that the ICRA is also trying to facilitate the exchange of germplasm lines and cotton varieties through international cooperation. Dr, Negm noted that ICRA had started a monthly newsletter titled ‘Cotton Innovations’ that had been assigned an ISSN number and is being published regularly to highlight the latest progress in cotton science. ICRA and ICAC will shortly publish a book of papers, which is a compilation of
research results and will be presented at the WCRC-7. ICRA also proposes to publish an Encyclopedia of cotton with contributions from researchers across the globe.