



# **International Cotton Advisory Committee**

**Provisional Minutes**

**83rd ICAC Plenary Meeting**

**March 23-24, 2026  
Bremen Parliament Building  
Bremen, Germany**





## 83<sup>rd</sup> ICAC Plenary Meeting

### MINUTES

#### 1<sup>st</sup> Plenary Session: Inauguration

9:00 am to 10:00 am, Monday, March 23, 2026

The session opened at 9:05 am. Executive Director Eric Trachtenberg welcomed delegates, observers, and guests on behalf of the Secretariat and noted that, despite travel and logistical challenges, strong participation reflected the continued commitment of members to ICAC.

He recalled that the previous year had been particularly challenging, including the cancellation of the planned Plenary in Tanzania, and thanked all participants for their efforts to attend the meeting in Bremen.

The agenda was approved without comment.

#### Executive Director's Report

Mr. Trachtenberg expressed appreciation to the European Union and the Bremen Cotton Exchange for their support in hosting the Plenary at short notice. He also acknowledged partner organizations and individuals including the European Cotton Alliance (ECA), Centro Algodonero Nacional (CAN), and the Hellenic Cotton Association (HCA) who supported the meeting.

He conveyed the Secretariat's gratitude to the Government of Tanzania and colleagues in Mwanza for preparations made for the previously planned Plenary and expressed hope that ICAC could reconvene there in the future. He also recognized Mr. Marco Mtunga on the occasion of his forthcoming retirement.

The Executive Director welcomed the Chair *ad interim*, Mr. Shreyans Gupta of India, who would assume the role of Standing Committee Chair at the conclusion of the Plenary, as would Vice Chair *ad interim*, Mr. Igor Moraes of Brazil.

He reviewed the global cotton and textile outlook, noting continued challenges including competition from synthetic fibers, market volatility, climate shocks, and trade uncertainty. At the same time, he emphasized cotton's advantages as a natural, biodegradable, and renewable fiber that contributes to sustainability, livelihoods, and inclusive development. He reiterated ICAC's position that cotton should be viewed as a Global Public Good because it delivers value far beyond the economics of the fiber itself.

## **Data and Publications**

The Executive Director reported progress in strengthening ICAC's data and analytical work. He noted that the *Cotton Data Book* has been converted into an annual publication, providing more timely updates on production costs, agronomic practices, and sustainability indicators.

He also referred to continued publications including *Cotton This Month*, *World Cotton Statistics*, *The ICAC Recorder*, the *Specialty Cotton Report*, and the *Production and Trade Subsidies Report*, as well as the launch of the *Textiles Observer* in 2025.

He reported ongoing upgrades to ICAC's data portals, including improved visualization tools and scenario analysis capabilities, allowing stakeholders to better assess risks and policy impacts.

## **Agricultural Development and Sustainability**

The Executive Director outlined ICAC's work on regenerative agriculture and climate-smart practices aimed at improving smallholder productivity and incomes. He cited ongoing initiatives in Zambia, Cameroon, and Uzbekistan involving techniques such as biochar, bokashi, and jeevamrit.

He emphasized that these approaches have demonstrated significant yield improvements and offer potential additional income through carbon payment systems, contributing to income diversification and resilience.

Addressing environmental concerns, he stated that cotton is often mischaracterized as excessively water- and chemical-intensive. He emphasized ICAC data showing that cotton occupies a relatively small share of global cropland and water use and highlighted its biodegradability compared to synthetic fibers, which contribute to microplastic pollution.

## **Textiles and Value Chain Development**

Mr. Trachtenberg highlighted ICAC's expanding work downstream in the textile value chain. He emphasized the importance of value addition through spinning, weaving, and garment manufacturing, noting the significant increase in value from raw cotton to finished products.

He referred to the first Global Cotton and Textiles Investment Summit, scheduled for November 19-21, 2026, in Uzbekistan, as a key initiative to mobilize investment and support industrial development in ICAC member countries.

He also noted other ongoing initiatives including the development of a textile portal, the Cotton Innovation Platform, and increased engagement with brands and market actors.

## **Sustainability and Institutional Developments**

The Executive Director emphasized that sustainability is now integrated across all ICAC activities. He highlighted the importance of traceability systems while noting the need to ensure that smallholders are not excluded from markets due to regulatory requirements.

He informed delegates that, in accordance with Article 6, Section 1 of the Rules and Regulations, the Standing Committee had decided to conclude the work of the Subcommittee on Social, Environmental and Economic Performance (SEEP), noting that it had fulfilled its mandate and left a strong institutional legacy.

## **Advocacy and International Engagement**

Mr. Trachtenberg reported that ICAC has been working with industry partners to develop a global cotton advocacy platform aimed at strengthening communication of cotton's environmental and social benefits.

He also highlighted increased engagement with international organizations, including the WTO, FAO, UNIDO, and UN Trade, as well as participation in European Union policy discussions, including the ICAC's presence on the Product Environmental Footprint Technical Advisory Board (TAB) — one of only four international organizations in the world to be added to the TAB.

## **Events and Outreach**

The Executive Director reviewed ICAC's global events, including World Cotton Day in Benin (2024), Rome (2025), and planned activities in Uzbekistan (2026).

He noted that the ICAC Plenary in Bremen, held just prior to the International Cotton Conference Bremen, represents an important opportunity to bring together stakeholders across the value chain.

## **Closing Remarks**

In concluding, the Executive Director reflected on his visits to member countries and emphasized the shared commitment across the cotton sector. He thanked members of the Secretariat individually and paid special tribute to Business Development Manager Ms Caroline Taco, who will depart ICAC in June 2026 for her decades of service to ICAC.

## **ICAC Researcher of the Year Award 2026**

Dr. Keshav Kranthi, Chief Scientist, announced that the recipient of the ICAC Researcher of the Year Award 2026 was Dr Charudatta Mayee of India.

Dr. Kranthi outlined Dr. Mayee's extensive contributions to agricultural research and administration, including leadership roles in research institutions and numerous national and international recognitions.

Dr. Mayee accepted the award and thanked ICAC for the honor. He noted his long professional association with Germany and stated that the award motivates him to continue his work, particularly in improving cotton productivity in rainfed regions of central India.

## **Remarks by the Incoming Chair**

The incoming Chair of the Standing Committee thanked the European Union, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the Bremen Cotton Exchange for hosting the Plenary and congratulated the organizers.

He recalled ICAC's history since its establishment in 1939 and noted that, despite ongoing challenges, the organization has continued to deliver important work for the global cotton sector.

He highlighted key Secretariat initiatives, including work on regenerative agriculture, carbon-related opportunities, the Global Cotton and Textiles Investment Summit, and expanded efforts on demand, innovation, and data.

He concluded by thanking the Standing Committee and Secretariat and expressing appreciation for the support received in his role as Chair *ad interim*.

## **Signing of Memorandum of Understanding**

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between ICAC and Gherzi, under which Gherzi will serve as a knowledge partner for the Global Cotton and Textiles Investment Summit.

ICAC Head of Textiles Kanwar Usman participated in the signing on behalf of ICAC.

Mr. Navdeep Sodhi of Gherzi expressed appreciation for the collaboration and noted that the partnership would support work in emerging markets and contribute to the development of the cotton sector.

## **Closing of the Session**

The Chair invited Delegates and Secretariat staff to participate in a group photograph, marking the conclusion of the Inaugural Session at 10:02 am.