Proposal for the implementation of the recommendations of a Task Force on priorities for Phase VII

Document prepared by the ECP/GR Secretariat for the 9th Steering Committee meeting (Izmir, Turkey, 22-25 October 2003)

Summary

This document is prepared in response to the request of the ECP/GR Steering Committee who asked the Secretariat to translate a set of recommendations for a new Phase of ECP/GR into practical proposals. Focus is therefore put only on those aspects of the Programme that would require some changes, as well as on the proposed priorities for Phase VII.

The initiative undertaken in 2002 by a Task Force composed of 13 members of the Steering Committee has resulted in a set of 25 recommendations that are meant to improve the ECP/GR mode of operation and communication, its priority setting mechanism and implementation.

The main areas touched by this document and the proposed changes can be briefly summarized as follows:

Structure
Network Coordinating Groups (NCGs), their structure and role are defined in detail.

Modus operandi
New rules for the participation of Working Group (WG) members in ECP/GR meetings are presented with three possible options.

Communication
Improved ways to exchange information within and between the Networks are proposed.

Project funding
New role of the Secretariat for fund raising is described.

Steering Committee
Opening of the Steering Committee to new observers (EUCARPIA) and steps to strengthen links between ECP/GR and the European Commission are defined.

Setting priorities
A detailed planning and prioritizing mechanism is established, enabling the definition of priorities and actions for each subsequent Phase. No more than 10 Working Groups would remain fully operational during each Phase, while other Groups would still receive minimum support from the Secretariat. The steps of a planning mechanism are summarized in Figure 1, page 13.

Priorities for Phase VII
Four main issues are proposed: 1) Characterization and evaluation; 2) Task sharing; 3) *In situ* and on-farm conservation; 4) Documentation.

Structure of the Networks
A few changes are proposed, such as the merging of the Vegetables and Minor crops Networks and the expansion of the Grain Legumes Network into an "Oil and Protein Crops Network"

Implementation of themes
A number of specific projects and workshops are proposed, including a project to focus on sharing of responsibilities as a possible model of a European genebank system and a workshop on the impact of biotechnologies and bioinformatics on PGR conservation and use.

1. Introduction

During the mid-term meeting of Phase VI of ECP/GR, held in October 2001 in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, the ECP/GR Steering Committee established a Task Force with the objective of making proposals on priorities for Phase VII, taking into account developments in relevant science and technology and in international policy and economy.

This Task Force, chaired by Martin Smith, UK, also included the following members of the Steering Committee: Lars Landbo, Denmark; Elina Nikkola and Leena Hömmö, Finland; Dominique Planchenault, France; Frank Begemann, Germany; László Holly, Hungary; Miriam Waldman, Israel; Fabrizio Grassi, Italy; Bert Visser, The Netherlands; Patrick Mulvany, NGOs; Eliseu Bettencourt, Portugal; Jens Weibull, Sweden; and Gert Kleijer, Switzerland.

The Task Force developed a questionnaire in 2002, to seek the views of key players in ECP/GR, in order to establish a basis for informed decisions to be taken for Phase VII. This document was sent to all Steering Committee members, Working Group Chairs and Vice-Chairs, Network Coordinating Group representatives, Database managers and the Internet Advisory Group. A total of 28 replies were received. The Task Force concluded its mandate with the analysis of the questionnaire and the resulting set of 25 proposed recommendations.

The ECP/GR Secretariat was then asked by the Steering Committee to prepare an implementation document to convert the above-mentioned recommendations for the future mode of operation of ECP/GR and for priority setting into practical terms.

In this document, for each set of recommendations (copied in boxes along the document for easy reference), the required changes are summarized, background and issues for implementation are discussed and practical implementation proposals are drafted, sometimes with two or more possible alternatives left open for discussion by the Steering Committee.

This document should be read by also taking into account the other background documents related to Item 3 of the Steering Committee meeting agenda, and specifically the following (available at http://www.ecpgr.cgiar.org/SteeringCommittee/SCRestrict/SCR.htm):

> Analysis of results of questionnaire and recommendations;
> Annex I: Summary of results of questionnaire;
> Annex II: Summary of recommendations;
> Annex III: Procedure for setting priorities and objectives and for monitoring the process towards their achievement;
> Recommendations for Phase VII of ECP/GR – Additional contribution from Germany.

The baseline used for the proposed changes is the structure and mode of operation of ECP/GR during Phase VI (see reports of 7th and 8th Steering Committee meetings, respectively held in Braunschweig, Germany in 1998 and in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation in 2001).

2. Mode of operation and communication

Recommendation 1
Before the end of each half Phase, Network Coordinating Groups should, in consultation with Working Groups, determine the division of work between the Working Groups and the Network Coordinating Group for the subsequent Phase. The results should be communicated as a proposal to the mid-term or end of Phase meeting of the Steering Committee. [Purpose: to provide the Steering Committee with information for budgetary purposes.]

Recommendation 2
Before the end of years 1 and 3 of each Phase, Network Coordinating Groups should assess and monitor progress of Working Groups against targets and, as appropriate, provide guidance to them.
[Purpose: to give the Network Coordinating Group a role in helping Working Groups to achieve their objectives; and to improve cooperation, communication and exchange of information within a Network.]

Recommendation 3
Meetings of complete Network Groups should only take place where a need is identified and should concentrate on crosscutting issues and/or longer-term strategies. [Purpose: to limit costs and to ensure that available resources are prioritized for Working Group activity.]

2.1. Structure

2.1.1 Changes required by Recommendations 1 to 3 (also taking into account recommendations 13 and 15)
Role and outputs of Network Coordinating Groups should be better defined.

2.1.2 Background and issues
During Phase VI, Network Coordinating Groups were established for crop Networks. These self-coordinating Groups were supposed to be composed of WG Chairs and Vice-Chairs or Database managers. In practice, due to the different nature of the various crop Networks, NCGs have assumed different shapes. For example, the Forages and Grain Legumes Networks (each of them composed of only one WG and several databases), have selected a sub-group within the WG to act as NCG; the Industrial Crops and Potato Network and the Vegetables Network have included, within the NCG, also representatives of crops with no WG; the Minor Crops Network (which started Phase VI with no WGs or databases), has formed a NCG on the basis of nominations proposed by the National Coordinators.

In order to properly operate according to the recommendations proposed for the future, each Network (including thematic Networks) would need to establish/reconfirm a well-defined and committed NCG, its role and expected outputs.

Recommendation 2, if read together with the description of procedures listed in Annex III, seems to imply a reduction of each Phase to 4 years (down from 5). However, after checking with the Task Force members, the Secretariat concluded that there was no intention to propose such a change. Therefore, the implementation proposals presented throughout this document have been adjusted to the usual 5-year cycle (e.g. events proposed for the end of year 1 and 3 were moved to mid of year 2 and 4). An acceleration of the cycles to 4 years would increase the overall time dedicated to monitoring and planning, thereby causing a further drainage of resources from activities to administration.

2.1.3 Implementation proposal 1 (IP 1)

Definition and structure of the NCGs
NCGs are defined as groups of maximum 5-7 people, established within each Network (crop and thematic) and composed of the Working Group or Task Force leaders plus a number of other coopted Network members. NCGs are coordinated by a Network Facilitator, selected by the Group among its members and with the task of delivering the NCG outputs to the ECP/GR Secretariat and to the ECP/GR Steering Committee.

Role of the NCGs
In consultation with Working Groups, NCGs formulate proposals to the attention of the Steering Committee on Working Group priorities and activities, as indicated by Implementation Proposal 6 below.

By the middle of the second and fourth year of each phase, the NCGs provide the Secretariat with an assessment of the progress made by each Network and of the guidance provided to them.

Outputs and meetings of the NCGs
NCGs will have to provide a number of outputs consisting in the following:
* Two reports on Network progress (mid-term of years 2 and 4);
* Revision of the division of work within the Network in the current Phase and proposal for the subsequent Phase (by mid-term of Phase);
* Definition of the division of work within the Network in the subsequent Phase (by end of Phase).

NCGs are expected to deliver the above outputs mainly working through email communication, except for one regular meeting to be held during the first half of year 3. NCG meetings are self-organized. Alternatively, several NCG meetings can be held, during the first part of the third year, at the same time in one location, in order to benefit from the technical support of the Secretariat.

Sustainability of the NCGs (and the entire system)[1]
In order to ensure proper functioning of the NCGs, the Group members will have to commit part of their time to this coordinating task. It is the responsibility of National Coordinators to find ways whereby NCGs members can see their ECP/GR activity formally acknowledged as part of their terms of reference.

Planning of each Phase of ECP/GR
Each Phase of ECP/GR is planned to last 5 years, with budget, priorities and active Working Groups broadly defined in the mid-term meeting of each previous Phase and reconfirmed at the end of Phase meeting.

---

[1] The role of the NCGs is specifically strengthened in this case and it is important to enable its members to operate properly. However, all the members of the Working Groups should be enabled to offer inputs-in-kind to the system, and this should also be the responsibility of the National Coordinators.

2.2 *Modus operandi*

Most respondents considered the existing *modus operandi* to work reasonably well, including the 2-tier membership with attending and corresponding members. However, a significant number had some doubts, particularly about the 2-tier membership of Working Groups and the reduced opportunity this provided for corresponding members to contribute to the decision making process. Several expressed the view that without equal ownership of decisions there was a risk of reduced inputs-in-kind.

Recommendation 4
Taking into account the various suggestions made on how to resolve this problem, the Steering Committee is invited to consider the following options, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive:

a)   Revision of the existing key for countries to nominate attending and corresponding members.

b)   Encourage corresponding members to make greater use of the facility to provide reports and written comments for consideration by the Working Group.

c)   Each country to define its members for each Working Group, with no distinction between attending and corresponding members. On the basis of a quota of participants assigned to each country, a maximum number of ECP/GR-funded participants per country could attend the meetings of each Phase, with the option to send self-funded participants to the remaining meetings. (e.g. out of 30 meetings that might be programmed for a Phase, country X/Y/Z would be allowed to send ECP/GR-funded participants to 25/20/15 meetings, with the option to send self-funded participants to the remaining 5/10/15 meetings.

d)   An increase in Member Country subscriptions sufficient to enable one participant per country to attend each Working Group meeting. To enable proper budgeting, each Member Country should nominate the Working Groups in which they would like to participate.

e)   If funding is not sufficient to enable full participation in nominated Working Groups (either because of no increase in subscription or an increase is not sufficient), the Steering Committee might like to consider the following options:

       - A maximum amount of support to be provided for each Working Group, leaving it to the Working Group to decide who should benefit from support and to what extent. This could, for example, be on a rota basis; or
        - Allow corresponding members to attend at their own expense.

2.2.1 Changes required by Recommendation 4
The distinction between corresponding and attending members should be eliminated, if possible, depending on budget increase and the choice of one or a combination of more options among the five proposed by recommendation 4. The possibility to attend the WG meeting should be granted to every specific country representative, for the reciprocal benefit of the Networks and the National Programmes.

2.2.2 Background and issues
Implementation of this recommendation depends on the preference of the Steering Committee for one or more of the options suggested by the Task Force, as well as on budget levels. However, if the distinction between attending and corresponding members is maintained, it is important that the number and type of meetings planned during each entire Phase be known at the start of each Phase, to avoid the risk of nominating attending members of Groups that would not meet at all.

It should be noted that corresponding members have always been encouraged to participate in the Working Group activities (option b of recommendation 4) as well as having been allowed to attend at their own expense (option e, second bullet point).

The adoption of country quotas per Phase (option c), to be spent independently from the type of meetings planned, would eliminate the two-tier membership as well as the risk of nominating members for meetings that would not be held. It would also facilitate the possibility of arranging meetings unplanned at the start of the Phase. However, National Coordinators might risk spending their entire quota too soon. This risk could be reduced by adopting proposal B below.

2.2.3 Implementation proposal 2 (IP 2)

Modus operandi for participation in ECP/GR funded meetings

Three alternative proposals are presented:

A) The two-tier approach (attending/corresponding members) is maintained unaltered. The existing quotas are revised depending on the number of WGs that are planned to meet during each Phase. The Steering Committee should approve a detailed plan of WG meetings at the start of the Phase.

B) Each country is assigned a quota of funded participants to attend any type of meeting organized by ECP/GR in the entire Phase. When the country has exhausted its quota, either it sends self-funded participants to meetings of interest, or it buys an additional quota by increasing its annual contribution[2].

C) The distinction between attending and corresponding members is abolished. No country quota is introduced. At the start of each Phase, countries nominate members for all the groups in which there is interest and availability to actively participate. All Working Group members have the right to attend the meetings at ECP/GR cost. The NCGs would have to take into account the estimated cost involved whenever proposing a meeting of the entire Working Group and therefore they should propose cheap solutions if necessary. This would involve taking into account differences in local costs and flights or organizing meetings jointly with other events, when part of the Group would attend at their own cost anyway.

---

[2] Example: Country A has been assigned a quota of 15 ECP/GR-funded participants in 5 years (on average 3 x year). At the end of the third year, country A has already sent 15 ECP/GR-funded participants to various meetings. However, with an increase of 50% of the annual contribution of country A for Year 4 and 5, three more ECP/GR-funded participants would be granted for the rest of the Phase. The formula to calculate the additional quota to be granted would be: $I \times Q \times Y = N$ where:
  I = Percentage increase of annual contribution
  Q = Averaged annual country quota of ECP/GR funded-participants
  Y= Years of increased contribution
  N = additional number of granted ECP/GR funded-participants during the rest of the Phase
In the above example: 0.5 increase of annual country contribution x 3 funded participants per year x 2 years of increased contribution = 3 additional ECP/GR-funded participants granted

2.3 Coordination and communication between Working Groups and within and between Networks

> **Recommendation 5**
> Working Group Chairpersons should be asked to provide a short standardized report, which could be developed from that produced for the purposes of this review, one month prior to meetings of the Steering Committee. Such reports should be made available through the ECP/GR listserver for the benefit of other Working Groups.
> [Purpose: to provide useful information to the Steering Committee and to improve communication between Networks and between Working Groups.]
>
> **Recommendation 6**
> Where considered appropriate, and acting on proposals from Network Coordinating Groups, developed in consultation with Working Groups, the Steering Committee should, subject to availability of resources, convene *ad hoc* meetings of Working Group/Network Chairpersons to consider and advise Working Groups on the handling of common problems. [Purpose: to consider common problems and, where appropriate, to identify common solutions.]
>
> **Recommendation 7**
> A listserver should be created to enable greater coordination and communication between Chairpersons of Networks and Working Groups through e-discussion. [Purpose: to provide a forum of e-discussion on a continuing basis.]
>
> **Recommendation 8**
> Working Group and other reports should be published on the ECP/GR Web site in order to improve the information flow within and between Working Groups and Networks. This could produce cost savings by reducing the number of printed versions. [Purpose: to cut costs, releasing resources for other purposes.]

2.3.1 Changes required by Recommendations 5 to 8
- Reports provided by Working Group Chairs should be standardized and made available through the ECP/GR listserver one month prior to meetings of the Steering Committee;
- *Ad hoc* meetings of Working Groups/Network Chairs could be convened to discuss common problems, upon proposals made by the NCGs;
- A new listserver should be created to enable greater communication between Chairpersons of Networks and Working Groups;
- WG meeting and other reports should be published on the ECP/GR Web site to improve information flow and save costs by reducing the number of printed versions.

2.3.2 Background and issues
These recommendations can be easily implemented.
Regarding the opportunity to spend resources on preparing ECP/GR publications, it is general perception that they constitute an important public awareness product. A survey of IPGRI's Europe programme stakeholders carried out in June 2003 resulted in 95% of respondents saying that they found the ECP/GR meeting reports useful (61%) or very useful (34%). A reduction of the number of copies from the current 800 -1000 down to 500 could offer very limited savings of printing and distribution costs. The choice to produce or not produce hard copies of meeting reports could be made by the NCGs, in consultation with Working Groups. The related costs should then be allocated from the respective Network's budget.

2.3.3 Implementation proposal 3 (IP 3)

Reporting of Working Group activities
The ECP/GR Secretariat should require WG Chairs to produce reports in a standardized format two months in advance of the Steering Committee meetings and make them

available through the ECP/GR listserver and on the Web site, no later than one month prior to the meetings.

<u>Meetings of Chairpersons</u>
Proposals from NCGs to convene *ad hoc* meetings of Working Groups/Network Chairs to discuss specific problems should be taken into consideration by the Steering Committee for funding.

<u>Communication between Chairpersons</u>
A listserver specifically dedicated to Working Group and Network Chairs should be set up, possibly in parallel with the existing ECP/GR listservers managed by the Nordic Gene Bank, and the Secretariat would encourage and promote its use.

<u>Publication of meeting reports</u>
Working Group reports will be published on the ECP/GR Web site and linked to the respective Working Group pages immediately after the meetings, as "Discussion and recommendations" in draft form. These documents should subsequently be replaced with the final report, including all the articles presented during the meetings.

2.4 Working language

After considering occasional requests for translation and the costs involved, no changes are proposed by the Task Force. English should remain the working language in the meetings and no translation of documents or interpretation during meetings should be provided.

2.5 Project funding and the role of Secretariat

Recommendation 9
With the aim of providing the Secretariat with the resources necessary to become proactive in the identification of new and additional funding sources, the Steering Committee is invited to consider the following options, which are not intended to be mutually exclusive:
a)   Subscriptions from Member Countries should be increased.
b)   All current expenditure of the Secretariat should be examined to identify potential savings.

Recommendation 10
The Secretariat should seek to establish more formal arrangements, e.g. an MOU, with the EU and the private sector over project funding. Similar arrangements should be sought with other potential multilateral funding bodies, particularly with the proposed Global Conservation Trust. [Purpose: to improve certainty and stability of funding for projects.]

2.5.1 Changes required by Recommendations 9 and 10
- The Secretariat, which would maintain all its coordinating role, should be enabled to assume the additional task of being more proactive in identifying funding sources.
- The Secretariat should seek to establish new formal arrangements with the EU, the private sector and other potential multilateral funding bodies, such as the Global Crop Diversity Trust, with the purpose of improving stability of funding for projects submitted and carried out by members of the WGs

2.5.2 Background and issues
The new fund raising role required of the Secretariat could be quantified in terms of a part-time position (30 %) for a fund-raising consultant, equivalent to about 16,000 Euro per year.

It should be noted that a formal acknowledgment of the linkage between ECP/GR and the programme of the upcoming EC Regulation on genetic resources has been included in the draft text of the regulation and this can be the basis for further improvement of stable funding of ECP/GR activities through the EC.

On the other hand, the Global Crop Diversity Trust (GCT) is currently defining eligibility criteria to access its trust funds. These funds are likely to be open to worldwide crop networks organized in consortia and ECP/GR Networks might be in the best position to be part or even promoters of such networks.

2.5.3 Implementation proposal 4 (IP 4)

Fund-raising role of the Secretariat
Budget for Secretariat support should be increased by 16,000 Euro per year during Phase VII to account for the additional fund raising role.
This role specifically includes the following tasks:
- Strengthening the link between ECP/GR and the EC offices and programmes on plant genetic resources;
- Exploring the possibility to ensure funding from private sector and other agencies for ECP/GR module activities;
- Monitoring closely the GCT development process with the aim of informing the ECP/GR Networks of the most appropriate ways to be an active partner in the process, including benefiting from the fund.

2.6 Observers on the Steering Committee

Recommendation 11
The European Commission should be invited to become a full member of the Steering Committee. ISF, FAO, IPGRI EuroMaB, NGB and NGOs should continue to be invited as observers to meetings of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee may wish to consider extending observer status to other organizations, e.g. EUCARPIA either on a permanent or an *ad hoc* basis, although it is recommended that this be kept to the minimum necessary.

Recommendation 12
Working Groups should consider inviting the private sector, NGOs and specific experts to their meetings in appropriate cases and on an *ad hoc* basis. The private Sector and NGOs should only attend on a self-funded basis.

2.6.1 Changes required by Recommendations 11 and 12
The status of observers and full members in the Steering Committee should be redefined/reconfirmed.

The possibility of inviting observers to the Working Group meetings should be redefined/reconfirmed, also in its modalities.

2.6.2 Background and issues
It is since Phase V that the European Commission has been proposed (and formally invited in various occasions) to become a full member of ECP/GR, along with the Member Countries. Full membership implies agreement to pay contributions to the Programme, as well as granting full member status in the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee makes decisions (on a consensus basis) regarding the general scope of the Networks and the establishment or continuation of Working Groups and approves the Programme's budget (see report of the Seventh meeting for all details on the role of the Steering Committee).

So far, observers in the Steering Committee (SC) have had direct access to all the information circulated to the SC and have been welcome to openly contribute to all the SC and task force discussions. However, they did not have the possibility to veto any decision. Observers in the SC meeting currently attend on a self-funded basis (FAO and ISF, IPGRI staff not belonging to the Secretariat, EuroMab) or receive support from the Programme (NGB, NGOs, IPGRI Secretariat).

Working Groups have traditionally invited and funded the participation in their meetings of specific experts on an *ad hoc* basis and, in some cases, but not systematically, also from the private sector or NGOs.

2.6.3 Implementation proposal 5 (IP 5)

ECP/GR and the European Commission
The European Commission is invited to become a full member of ECP/GR and therefore of the Steering Committee. The EC representative in the current ninth ECP/GR Steering Committee meeting and the ECP/GR Secretariat are invited to discuss existing practical options, either to ensure EC membership to ECP/GR or to formalize as much as possible a permanent link between ECP/GR and the EC activities on plant genetic resources.

Full membership of the EC in ECP/GR would not necessarily require the EC to directly contribute funds to the Programme but rather ensure that EC regulations and relevant programmes on genetic resources include a provision that all measures undertaken would be pursued in conjunction, when appropriate, with actions carried out in the same area by ECP/GR (as already indicated in the draft work programme of a proposed "Council Regulation establishing a Community programme on the conservation, characterization, collection and utilization of genetic resources in agriculture and repealing Regulation (EC) N. 1467/94").

It is also recommended that an Advisory Group composed of 3-5 members of the ECP/GR Steering Committee be regularly consulted by the EC with an advisory role on PGRFA policy.

Observers in the Steering Committee
Observer status in the Steering Committee continues to be granted on a permanent basis to EuroMab, FAO, IPGRI, ISF, NGB, NGOs and is extended to EUCARPIA. Participation in meetings would be on a self-funded basis, with possible justified exceptions on an *ad hoc* basis.

Observers in the Working Group meetings
Working Groups should consider inviting the private sector, NGOs and specific experts to their meetings in appropriate cases and on an *ad hoc* basis. The private sector and NGOs should only attend on a self-funded basis.

3. *Setting priorities*

3.1 General rules for setting priorities

Recommendation 13
At their meetings before the end of the first half Phase (see Recommendation 1) Network Coordinating Groups will make proposals for Working Groups to be active in the subsequent Phase. The proposals should prioritize between Working Groups. They should also include a broad indication of the activities to be pursued by the Working Groups, prioritize those activities and identify the funds required. They should be communicated to the Secretariat at least one month prior to the mid-term review meeting of the Steering Committee.
[Purpose: to provide the information necessary for the Steering Committee to take decisions referred to in Recommendation 14].

Recommendation 14
At its mid-term review meeting, on the basis of the proposals for priorities made by Network Coordinating Groups (see Recommendation 13), the Steering Committee should determine which Working Groups will be active in the subsequent Phase. The Steering Committee should also set broad priorities and objectives, including the funds to be attributed to each Network/Working Group.

Recommendation 15
Prior to the end-of-Phase meeting of the Steering Committee, Working Groups to be active in the next Phase (see Recommendation 14), in consultation with Network Coordinating Groups as appropriate, should make proposals for specific priorities and objectives. Such proposals should include clear, measurable targets, dates for completion and an estimate of funding required. The proposals should be sent to the Secretariat and copied to Steering Committee members at the same time as the report referred to in Recommendation 5. The Steering Committee should adopt such proposals, provided they fit the broad priorities previously set by it and can be accommodated with available funds. [Purpose: to enable the Steering Committee to approve detailed proposals on the activities of Working Groups in the next Phase.]

Recommendation 16
The Steering Committee should consider making modest funds available to Working Groups that have no funded prioritized activity during any period, where they make proposals to promote continued contact between Working Group members by means other than through formal meetings. [Purpose: to promote contact between members of Working Groups when inactive.]

3.1.1 Changes required by Recommendations 13 to 16
In order to focus the limited resources of ECP/GR on agreed priorities during each Phase, the majority of the operational funds would be dedicated to activities undertaken by only a limited number of Working Groups during any period. Other Working Groups would not be closed, but could receive modest funds available to promote continued contact between WG members. This means that the Secretariat would maintain the regular services for all WGs, such as identifying WG members, distributing information, reporting on activities, considering proposals for actions and offering secretarial and technical advice.

A procedure should be introduced for setting priorities and planning Working Group activities with large anticipation, i.e. at the mid-term meeting of each previous Phase. Mid-term meetings of the Steering Committee would set broad priorities and objectives, determine which Working Groups would be active and the funds attributed to each Network/Working Group in the subsequent Phase.

3.1.2 Background and issues
Implementation of these recommendations would establish a regular and cyclical planning and priority setting mechanism that would allow early planning of each following Phase during the course of the previous Phase. The following proposal, if accepted, would therefore allow making plans for Phase VIII during Phase VII.

3.1.3 Implementation proposal 6 (IP 6)

Planning and prioritizing mechanism

Two months prior the mid-term Steering Committee meeting:
Network Coordinating Groups should provide the Secretariat/Steering Committee with a proposal related to the subsequent Phase, including the following elements:
- prioritize Working Groups to be active in the subsequent Phase;
- give a broad indication of activities to be pursued by WGs;
- prioritize among those activities and identify funds required, either potentially deriving from ECP/GR or from other sources or as inputs-in-kind. These activities might consist of meetings (WG, Network, *ad hoc*) or alternative actions (publication products, research, collecting, regeneration, etc.).

In order to deliver this information all NCGs should hold a meeting during the first part of year 3 of each Phase (see also IP1).

Mid-term Steering Committee meeting:
SC evaluates proposals from NCGs and determines which WGs would be prioritized for funding in the subsequent Phase, based on priorities established by NCGs. It also establishes broad priorities and objectives and the funds attributed to each Network/Working Group. The budget for the subsequent Phase has therefore to be approved, in broad terms, during the mid-term meeting of the ongoing Phase. It is expected that no more than 10 WGs remain active during a 5-year Phase and that they meet 1-2 times during the Phase.

Two months prior to the end of Phase Steering Committee meeting:
WGs to be active in next Phase, as defined in the previous mid-term meeting, in consultation with NCGs, as appropriate, provide proposals to the Secretariat/Steering Committee, with the following elements:
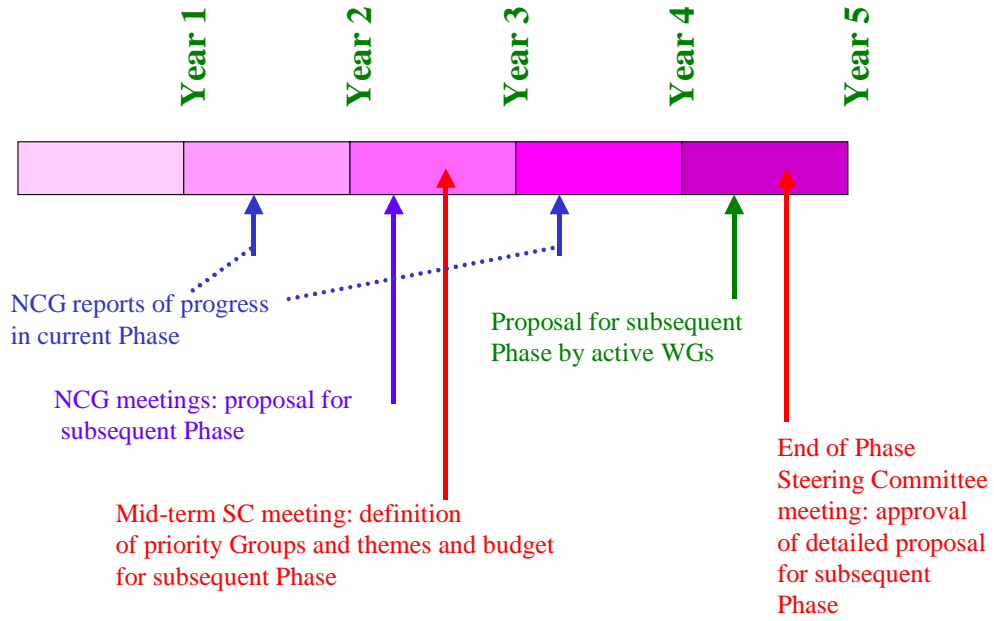
- Specific priorities and objectives;
- Clear, measurable targets, dates for completion and estimate of funding required from ECP/GR, based on funds attributed by the Steering Committee to each Network/Working Group.

WGs that are not planned to be prioritized for funding during the following Phase can make proposals (and request modest funds or technical support from the Secretariat) to promote continued contact between WG members by means other than formal meetings (example: support for exchange visits, participation of members in events organized by other associations, fund small components of the Group's workplan).

End of Phase Steering Committee meeting:
The Steering Committee adopts proposals presented by the WGs, provided they fit the broad priorities previously set and can be accommodated with available funds.

Fig.1 ECP/GR planning and prioritizing mechanism

Year 1   Year 2   Year 3   Year 4   Year 5

NCG reports of progress
in current Phase

NCG meetings: proposal for
subsequent Phase

Proposal for subsequent
Phase by active WGs

Mid-term SC meeting: definition
of priority Groups and themes and budget
for subsequent Phase

End of Phase
Steering Committee
meeting: approval
of detailed proposal
for subsequent
Phase

3.2 Main priorities for Phase VII

Recommendation 17
The restricted range of crops covered by the Multilateral System of the International Treaty should not affect ECP/GR priorities.

Recommendation 18
Although no specific action is currently necessary, ECP/GR National Co-ordinators should monitor developments in the EU and in other international fora that might impact on ECP/GR activities. If, at some future date, developments indicate the need for action within ECP/GR, this should be considered by the Steering Committee.
[Purpose: to ensure the Steering Committee is aware of new developments and their possible impact on ECP/GR activities.]

Recommendation 19
The private sector should be consulted and their views should be taken into account when establishing priorities. Similarly the importance of crops in the market place should also be taken into consideration. However, care must be taken in the weight given to these aspects in finalizing priorities. It is of the utmost importance not to lose sight of the broader and longer-term conservation issues which are a major part of the raison d'être of ECP/GR.
[Purpose: to ensure all relevant information is available to the Steering Committee when considering priorities. It would be for the Steering Committee to decide what weight to be given to information from different sources.]

Recommendation 20
Priorities for Phase VII should focus on 4 main issues:

· Characterisation and evaluation for conservation (e.g. genetic integrity, genetic drift, diversity analysis), and sustainable utilisation of genetic resources (including for traits of agronomic importance) using inter alia modern technologies such as molecular markers, genomics and bioinformatics;
· Task sharing through collaboration, rationalisation and specialisation of activities and collections (formation of core collections, identification of most original samples) to maximise efficient use of human and financial resources;
· In situ and on farm conservation, including an analysis of material subject to in situ and on farm conservation, and development of conservation and management techniques in relation to the existing opportunities of ex situ conservation;
· Documentation - establishment, completion, improvement and maintenance of national PGR inventories, central crop databases, including validation of data, integration of characterisation and evaluation data, improved and integrated data management, completion of infrastructure for automatic up-dating and completion of the national inventories and the EURISCO catalogue in the EPGRIS project.

Recommendation 21
Although no respondent referred to it, the Steering Committee is recommended to reflect on the network structure, which could be modified to focus on the utilisation aspects of PGR as follows:

· Cereals Network (no change)
· Forages Network (no change)
· Fruit Network (no change)
· Oil and Protein Crops Network (old Grain Legumes Network + rape + sunflower)
· Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network (old Industrial Crops and Potato Network)
· Vegetable, Aromatic and Medicinal Crops Network (old Minor Crops Network + old Vegetable Crops Network)
· Documentation and Information Network (no change)
· In situ and On Farm Conservation Network (no change)
· Inter-regional Co-operation Network (no change).

Recommendation 22
In making proposals for activities in Phase VII, Working Groups should restrict themselves to the 4 priority areas identified above. They should summarise progress to date in achieving those objectives and set out the necessary tasks and expected dates for their completion. [Purpose: to ensure that Working Groups make relevant proposals for activity in Phase VII.]

3.2.1 Changes required by Recommendations 17 to 22
-The Steering Committee should make sure that it remains aware of and takes into account new developments in international fora that might impact on ECP/GR activities (e.g. global agreements and initiatives affecting genetic resources, changes in EU policy and legislation, etc.).
- The private sector should be regularly consulted, when establishing priorities, with the purpose of being kept aware of the variable importance of crops on the market.
- Priorities should be defined for Phase VII.
- Network structure in Phase VII should be defined.
- A mechanism whereby WGs make appropriate proposals for activities in Phase VII should be defined.

3.2.2 Background and issues
It has been acknowledged by the Task Force that the Steering Committee, when prioritizing ECP/GR activities among crops, should take a broad and long-term view of the importance of conserving PGRFA in general. However, it should also remain aware of the importance of crops on the market and other factors that might influence fund raising and interest for activities on specific crop genetic resources.

The proposed changes in the Network structure would have the following implications:

Oil and Protein Crops Network (old Grain Legumes Network + Rape + Sunflower): this change would affect the *Brassica* WG, which includes industrial and vegetable *Brassica*. This change should take into account that the ECP/GR *Brassica* database includes all *Brassica* species and it has so far benefited from the existence of one single *Brassica* WG.

Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network (old Industrial Crops and Potato Network): the effect of this change consists in removing from this Network activities related to oil crops. Therefore, any activity on Sunflower would have to be planned and undertaken within the Oil and Protein Crops Network.

Vegetable, Medicinal and Aromatic Plant Network (old Minor Crops Network + old Vegetables Network): This Network would be expanded to include the currently existing five Working Groups and two *ad hoc* Groups. Any activity previously planned on Minor Crops would have to be undertaken within the respective Networks (i.e. minor cereals in the Cereals Network, minor fruit in the Fruit Network and minor vegetables in the Vegetables Network).

3.2.3 Implementation proposal 7 (IP 7)

Information on new policy developments in international fora
When considering priorities for the subsequent Phase (i.e. at its mid-term meeting), the SC should have access, one month prior the meeting, to a background document compiling all relevant information on developments in the EU and in other international fora that might impact on ECP/GR activities, including the views of the private sector on priorities for the future. This document will be prepared by the Secretariat, mainly on the basis of information and opinions collected from National Coordinators, ISF and other observers in the SC. The Secretariat would also update and make this document available to the SC in a revised form one month prior the end of Phase SC meeting, with the purpose of verifying the choice of priorities made in the previous meeting.

<u>Priorities for Phase VII</u>
The four main issues described under Recommendation 20 are endorsed as priorities for Phase VII. By 30 April 2004, WGs should summarize progress to date in achieving objectives related to the four priority areas, make proposals for activities in Phase VII (2004-2008), restricting themselves to the four priority areas, and set out necessary tasks and dates for their completion. The available budget per Network/Working Group is defined by the SC meeting in Izmir 2003. The SC will discuss, revise and approve the proposals by the end of June 2004, through listserver discussion coordinated by the Secretariat.

<u>Network structure and Working Groups</u>
The following changes are proposed/made to the Network structure:

- Oil and Protein Crops Network (old Grain Legumes Network + Rape + Sunflower)
  Working Groups: Grain Legumes; Rape?; Sunflower?

- Sugar, Starch and Fibre Crops Network (old Industrial Crops and Potato Network)
  Working Groups: *Beta*, Potato; Fibre crops (flax and hemp)?

- Vegetable, Medicinal and Aromatic Plants Network (old Minor Crops Network + old Vegetables Network)
  Working Groups: *Allium, Brassica oleracea?,* Solanaceae; Umbellifer crops; Medicinal and Aromatic plants; Cucurbits ?; Leafy vegetables?

4. Implementation of themes linked to priorities[3]

Recommendation 23
The Steering Committee is recommended to establish model projects on high priority issues to be financed as part of the Phase VII budget.

A first model project should focus on the sharing of responsibilities as a possible model of a European genebank system. (A concept note could be provided by Germany and the ECP/GR Secretariat)

Recommendation 24:
The Steering Committee is recommended to analyse the relationship between the ECP/GR Networks and the supporting components (i.e. networks and Global Information System) of the International Treaty and undertake the necessary steps arising from such review.

Recommendation 25:
A workshop is recommended to assess opportunities arising from and impacts of modern technologies such as biotechnologies (molecular markers, genomics, etc) and bioinformatics for conservation and utilization of genetic resources

---

4.1.1 Changes required by Recommendations 23 to 25
Allocate specific sums from the overall budget for model projects on high priority issues and to specific actions as indicated in recommendations 23 to 25.

---

[3] Recommendations 23 to 25, proposed by Germany, were not discussed by the Task Force, due to late submission

4.1.2 Background and issues

These recommendations are meant to introduce a direct approach to the solution of existing problems in the integration of European activities on crop genetic resources. These proposals introduce initiatives that would not find their room in the existing structure of either Crop or Thematic Networks. This approach is similar to the creation during Phase VI of modules to be funded from extra (or external) sources. In this case, the intention is to directly identify funds from the ECP/GR budget for model projects or specific thematic workshops. The implication is the need to either increase the budget or to compete with the traditional use of operational funds for WG and Network meetings. Alternatively, specific model projects and thematic workshops could be recommended as such and the fund raising exercise be left to the new role of the ECP/GR Secretariat. Recommendation 24 requires the establishment of a Task Force within the Steering Committee and invites better integration of ECP/GR with the environment created by the International Treaty.

4.1.3 Implementation proposal 8 (IP 8)

Funding of model projects
Model projects on high priority issues can be proposed for funding to the Steering Committee. A specific budget line is dedicated to this. [*The Secretariat is invited to raise specific funds for approved projects*].

A model project on sharing of responsibilities as a possible model of a European genebank system, submitted by Germany, is approved for funding, according to the budget indicated in the project proposal [to be provided by Germany].

ECP/GR and the International Treaty
A Task Force made of Steering Committee members is established to analyse the relationship between the ECP/GR Networks and the supporting components (i.e. Networks and Global Information System) of the International Treaty and to suggest the necessary steps arising from such review. The TF, composed of …. and chaired by ….will operate by email correspondence and deliver its analysis and recommendations by the Phase VII mid-term meeting of the Steering Committee.

Workshop on modern technologies
A workshop of about 15 people to assess opportunities arising from and impacts of modern technologies such as biotechnologies (molecular markers, genomics, etc) and bioinformatics for conservation and utilization of genetic resources will be organized in 2005 under the coordination of….
A budget of 35 000 Euro (including 30 000 for travel and local costs and 5 000 for the preparation), is allocated from the ECP/GR budget for Phase VII. [*The Secretariat is encouraged to raise 35 000 Euro for this initiative*].

5. *The European National Programmes Workshop in Alnarp*

As a result of the workshop held in Alnarp, Sweden on 24-26 April 2003, a number of recommendations and proposals were made by the participants involved in the discussion groups of various sessions and it seems appropriate to mention them in this document. Some of these suggestions are very general or addressed to national institutions, such as strengthening exchanges of experience, stimulating public awareness, broadening the use of genetic resources, etc. Other recommendations, listed below, were more practical and addressed more specifically to ECP/GR, as a possible international framework for their implementation. Some of them are in accordance with priorities and proposals already

discussed in this document (i.e. a project for a PGR system across Europe); others will deserve discussion by the Steering Committee before any implementation plan can be suggested:

- Increase the levels and improve public awareness of PGR issues and concerns;
- Establish a more unified PGR system across Europe, as a first step by formulating a vision and developing a proposal with different options, perhaps through a project proposal on case studies to be funded by the EC or others;
- Set up a task force to discuss the opportunity to create an ECP/GR label to promote marketing of "agricultural diversity rich" products;
- Develop standard methodologies to monitor genetic erosion in agriculture at the regional level in Europe;
- Evaluate genetic diversity within different crops through international cooperation.