

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE

CENTRE DE RECHERCHES POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT INTERNATIONAL

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July 13, 1979

Dr. M.S. Swaminathan
Secretary to the Government of India
Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation
Krishi Bhavan, New Delhi, 110001 India

Re: ICRAF

Personal

Dear Dr. Swaminathan,

Thank you for your cable sent to Amsterdam and the confidence in my chairmanship expressed in your message. Several other trustees and the Director General had also asked that I continue to head the board but as it was made quite clear that further IDRC financial support depended on electing another chairman, I resigned during my introductory statement (copy enclosed). I am staying on the board and have been elected a member of the executive and program committees.

Messrs. Audet (Treasurer), Hulse (Director AFNS) Division), Pfeifer and Bhoi (General Counsel and Assistant General Counsel) of IDRC attended the meeting as observers on my invitation. The board decided to increase the number of trustees from 10 to 14 and then elected J. Hulse to the Board. Dr. Robert Chandler Jr. argued that his advanced age (72) and home in an isolated location in the country prevented him from accepting the ICRAF chairmanship. Dr. King informed the meeting that you are prepared to become Chairman and the board elected you as Chairman and Mr. Hulse Vice-Chairman. Dr. King was reappointed Director General for another year or whenever funds run out, whichever event occurs sooner.

You will receive shortly the minutes of the meeting which will inform you in some detail about the Board discussions. Unfortunately, Dr. Jacques Diouf had to change his plans the last minute and did not attend.

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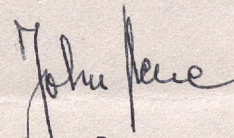
In my opinion Dr. King did much to promote the understanding for the role of agroforestry in tropical land management. His excellent talks in many parts of the world helped to raise public awareness greatly. He quickly recruited a competent scientific team and put ICRAF on the map as a focal point for badly needed research and information.

I am afraid however that these fine achievements were not matched with prudent planning, control of expenditures and a sustained effort to raise funds. There is no indication that an attempt has been made to balance expenditure with income. I therefore support IDRC's demand that a competent secretary-treasurer must work closely with Dr. King and approve financial commitments before they are made.

The Dutch and Swiss donors have recently renewed their pledges for this year and promised additional fund for 2 more years. IDRC has provided another Can. \$300,000. Dr. King undertook to reduce expenditures to more sustainable levels of \$70,000 per month, work expeditiously on the implementation of the work plan submitted and complete the State of Knowledge report on Agroforestry.

I do hope that you will accept the ICRAF Chairman's job, I fully realize that it adds to your many responsibilities. It would greatly enhance confidence in ICRAF's survival and effectiveness. I want to assure you that I am willing and anxious to make my contribution wherever required and I would value greatly to be associated with you in this enterprise.

Best personal regards,


John Bene

I have asked Mr. Inder Bhoi, IDRC's assistant General Counsel to act as secretary to this meeting subject to your agreement. Are you in agreement?

I have also invited Messrs. Audet, Treasurer of IDRC, Joe Hulse, the Director of IDRC's AFNS division and the man responsible at IDRC, the executing agency, for ICRAF's operations and James Pfeifer, IDRC's General Counsel and Secretary and Dr. Soels from the Dutch Aid Agency to attend the meeting as observers. Only trustees will participate in the "in camera" session. My friends from IDRC tell me that they will gladly answer questions but speak to a subject only if they are invited to do so.

This meeting is held at a critical time in ICRAF's history. The raison d'être for ICRAF has not changed. Matter of fact, there is increasing recognition that agroforestry has a vital role to play in tropical land management. What makes this a critical juncture in ICRAF's life is that the organization will run out of funds by mid July, in about 2-3 weeks, unless new funds can be secured in the meantime.

There are several reasons for this situation and we will discuss them in great detail later during this meeting. At this time I want to tell you that, in my opinion, the roots of ICRAF's problem go back a long time. When the sponsors' meeting under Joe Hulse's chairmanship decided April 6.77 that ICRAF should be established, many then present indicated that their country will support ICRAF's work, which was then as it is now, considered of very great importance to the welfare of tropical countries and especially to their poorest, least privileged population. Germany stated at that meeting that they will generously support ICRAF with core support and project support and then added that ICRAF must become affiliated with the Consultative Group to qualify for German core support. Several other donors, Belgium, Australia and some Scandinavian countries made their support also dependent on CG affiliation, presumably to reassure donors that their funds are wisely and productively used.

ICRAF has failed so far to become a member of the CG. We will discuss this subject later on, and I will then further comment on the reasons which in my opinion contributed to ICRAF's inability to achieve membership and will propose remedies. The failure of becoming a CG member meant that core funds dried up completely except those from IDRC, Netherlands and Switzerland and ICRAF operations had to be reoriented from the initial concept of an information gathering and distributing agency to one of project administrator. Project money is reportedly easier to secure than core support, this may be so but it is not easy and it takes time. This matter too we will discuss in more detail after the D.G.'s report, for now I wish to state that for a variety of reasons no sponsored project is in operation yet. On the other hand, cost of operations have been much higher than anticipated. We were warned that it is expensive to operate an agency in Nairobi. Commitments were made very rapidly to a point where operating expenses average about US \$100,000 monthly. With few exceptions, anticipated income did not yet materialize and not too many funds are anticipated in the near future.

ICRAF is for all practical purposes broke. IDRC's board and management shares our views that agroforestry based land management could significantly assist development in the tropics, they have a high respect for ICRAF's board of trustees and they are prepared to assist ICRAF further within the limited resources which the agency can divert at a time of extreme financial stringency. We will discuss shortly the amount of money which may be made available, IDRC also wishes to have the power to shape ICRAF operations to a sustainable level, it wishes to assure that its program of work is practical and "saleable". The required control over ICRAF would expire as soon as ICRAF can stand on its own feet.

I am convinced that IDRC management would feel more confident in ICRAF's future if the Chairman of the Board, who was in office while operations were conducted on an unsustainable level, would be replaced. I am therefore resigning as Chairman of the Board but will stay on as member of the Board of Trustees and IDRC management is in agreement that I do so. I also wish to add that this change in my status does in no way affect my enthusiasm for agroforestry and ICRAF and that the new chairman and all members of ICRAF will receive all the help I can provide.

May I add that the executive committee of IDRC met in Ottawa last week and the acting chairman and several governors told me after their meeting that their enthusiasm for agroforestry is in no way diminished and that they look forward to successful ICRAF operations and withdrawal of IDRC's control at the earliest possible date.

No.C. J380 /CFL/79.

July 24, 1979.

Dear Mr. Bene,

I thank you very much for your letter dated July 13, 1979. I am sorry that you are unable to continue as Chairman of the ICRAF Board. I shall do whatever I can to enable the organisation to grow and fulfil its mandate.

I had written to Dr. Hulse that the next meeting of the ICRAF Board may be held at the headquarters of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Rome in November this year. IFAD may be in a position to sponsor a project for providing fodder and fuel in rural areas, in addition to promoting employment for rural women. I hope this will be possible.

Please do let me know in case you are likely to come to India in the near future.

With my best regards,

Yours sincerely,

o/c. *(Signature)*
(M.S. Swaminathan)

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