



Report to the Global Plant Council

1st Annual Meeting, Montréal, Canada. July 28th -29th 2010

Melvin J. Oliver, Executive Director.

The first meeting of the Global Plant Council (GPC) took place in the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Montréal, Canada, starting on Wednesday July 28th and generously hosted by the Canadian Society of Plant Physiologists. Members of the Council attending the meeting were: Prof. Carl Douglas (Canadian Society of Plant Physiologists), Prof. (American Society of Plant Biologists), Prof. Zhihong Xu (Chinese Society of Plant Biologists), Prof. Kazuo Shinozaki (Japanese Society of Plant Physiologists), Prof. Wilhelm Gruissem (European Plant Science Organization), Prof. Hiroshi Ezura (Japanese Society for Plant Cell and Molecular Biology), Prof. Kasem Zaki Ahmed (African Crop Science Society), Prof. Kurt Fagerstedt (Scandinavian Plant Physiology Society), Prof. Francis Pierce (American Society of Agronomy), Prof. Choon-Hwan Lee (Botanical Society of Korea), Prof. Maria Gallo (Crop Science Society of America), Prof. Khanizade Shahrokh (Plant Canada), and Prof. Barry Pogson (Australian Society of Plant Scientists). Presiding over the meeting was the Executive Director of GPC, Prof. Melvin Oliver; joining the meeting as observers were Dr. Crispin Taylor (American Society of Plant Biologists), Dr. Karin Metzloff (European Plant Science Organization), and Prof. Zuhua He (Chinese Society of Plant Biologists). A revised Agenda (attached) was submitted just prior to the meeting in consideration of the pressing need to establish a working structure for the Global Plant Council.

Synopsis of Meeting:

After the welcoming remarks by the Chair of the meeting, Carl Douglas, and the acting Executive Director, Mel Oliver, the meeting was officially opened. The first order of business was to discuss the motion to appoint Mel Oliver as the Executive Director of GPC, a discussion that took place with Mel Oliver outside of the room. The vote, which included a tally of the email votes that occurred prior to the meeting, was unanimous to name Mel Oliver to the position. At this time Mel was informed and was asked to moderate the rest of the Council meeting.

The meeting resumed with a discussion of what efforts had been made since the Honolulu Summit to establish the GPC as a not-for-profit entity that could establish a structure that would enable the mission of the Council to be effectively launched. Mel described his attempts to register the GPC first in Japan and later in Australia. Both of these options, to establish GPC as global entity, met significant hurdles that were difficult to overcome given the resources available to the Council. After some discussion the Council agreed to look at four alternatives: Switzerland (Prof. Gruissem agreed to research this possibility), Finland (Prof. Fagerstedt agreed to research this possibility), Canada (both Prof. Douglas and Mel will research this possibility), and the United States (Mel and Prof. Ho will research this possibility). Once the Constitution and Bylaws have been established, this effort will be more effective.



At this point, the Council split into small groups to discuss the proposed structure for the GPC using the basic structure outlined in the attached agenda. Following lunch, the whole Council reconvened to seek a consensus viewpoint on the GPC Mission document. In this report I will summarize the discussion that ensued and what conclusions were reached; a more detailed account of the discussion will be posted on the GlobalPlantCouncil googlegroups site and represent the minutes of the meeting (recorded by Dr. Crispin Taylor).

Mission: The mission remains unchanged from the statement prepared in Honolulu in 2009.

Purpose Statement: The Council felt that a direct statement of purpose, based upon the convening motion presented in Honolulu in 2009 was needed to clearly state the underlying purpose of the GPC in our founding documents. The Council agreed to the following statement after much discussion (which continued the following morning),

“The Global Plant Council is a coalition of plant science societies of the world that brings plant scientists together to work synergistically toward solving the pressing problems facing humankind and that speaks with a strong voice from a plant science perspective to inform the global debate on these problems.”

Membership: The Council proposed that membership in GPC is for not-for-profit professional plant science societies/organizations, the key component being that the organization represents plant scientists. The conditions for membership (non-profit professional societies representing plant scientists, elected leadership, regional/national scope) will be detailed in the Bylaws of the Council. The Council will be open for petition to join and will allow a petitioner to explain why they ought to be a member, even if they do not meet all the criteria.

The Council decided to establish a formal record of membership with those members that were invited to attend or attended the Honolulu summit and/or the first Council meeting in Montréal forming a Founding Society Membership category. This record will include the completion and submission of a formal declaration of membership (see attached) after completion of whatever process of ratification is required by the member society. The Council also decided that membership should include a minimum yearly fee that will enable the GPC to function and to establish a legal entity. The fee structure would be such that it would be tightly linked to expenses and would offer a sliding scale so that member societies could contribute what they can afford. Requests for an exemption from such a fee will be entertained should it prove to be difficult for a member to raise.

The Council also agreed that there should be an obligation placed on members that comes with the benefits of being a member society and having input into the activities of GPC. The major obligation would be active participation in the GPC through emails, voting, phone calls, etc., and the commitment to send a representative to the annual meeting of the GPC, if possible. Representatives for each member society should serve a three-year term and should have high standing in the member society, for example by virtue of being one of the current or recent past presidents.



Voting: The Council proposed that to pass issues that require a vote of the members, 80% of the Council must record a vote and 75% of those votes must be a yes. The Council also proposed a “default ‘yes’” mechanism for membership votes such that if a member society does not reply (that is on a membership petition) within two weeks the vote is recorded as “yes”.

Executive Committee: The Council was in favour of establishing an Executive Committee so that short-term decisions and policy statements can be handled quickly and on behalf of the GPC as a whole. All policy decisions are to be ratified by the Council as a whole.

The Executive Committee would consist of five members, a President, a Vice-President, a Treasurer, and two other committee members. The Executive Committee will be formed from the membership and by election. Each member of the Executive Committee would serve a three-year term. The duties of the Executive Committee members will be detailed in the Bylaws of the Council. The Executive Director would be a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.

The Council felt that executive committee members must be delegates of their respective societies at the time of their election, and that the individual should be a current or former member of the member society’s leadership. Membership on the Executive Committee comes with a commitment to serve and to attend the annual meetings of the Council. The Executive Committee members should also commit to meet quarterly, electronically, and in person annually immediately preceding the GPC annual meeting. The Council felt that an election later this year would be an achievable goal so that Executive Committee members can be formally identified and begin their terms by Jan 1, 2011.

Quorum: After much debate the Council felt that for decisions to be made at the Annual Meeting there needs to be representation in person by at least 60% of the Council’s membership and that each member could also represent ONE other member society by proxy should that member society’s representative be unable to attend.

Standing Committees: The Council felt that these would form as the need arose.

Amendments to the Constitution or the Bylaws: The Council felt that changes to the Constitution or Bylaws must be approved by a 2/3 majority of the entire membership. There would be no proxy votes for this activity. Proposed changes must be posted/shared with Council members three months in advance of a vote to allow time for representatives to discuss the changes with their societies.

Funding for GPC: The Council discussed this at length with many suggestions of possible sources. The major consensus was to avoid funding sources that would compromise the integrity of GPC, such as multinational corporations or other commercial entities and individual government agencies. Fundraising efforts would be directed toward finding support for the larger efforts of GPC with regards to establishing and operating the working groups that will be formed to address the five problem areas identified in Honolulu. Initial support for the GPC operations that need to be in place before the larger scale funding efforts are undertaken should be provided by membership



dues. In this regard, GPC has been promised the funds that remain in the International Association for Plant Physiology, which has become inactive. These funds that amount to \$2,682 were kindly offered to GPC by Prof. Nakamura and Prof. Imaseki of the Japanese Society of Plant Physiologists.

Problem Area Statements and Working Groups: The original problem statements were discussed in small group sessions and then by the whole Council. Each statement was edited and the results are presented in an attached statement entitled “GlobalPlantCouncilMission”.

The Council discussed what products would be targeted by GPC, an important issue when looking for funding. The Council felt that one of its functions would be to rapidly respond to science policy requests that would come from many sources (governments, organizations etc). These science policy requests could be offered quickly to the membership and responses gathered and delivered in a consensus form on behalf of the global plant science community.

The major product that GPC would deliver would come from the Working Groups that GPC would assemble to address each of the problem statements that have been agreed to be priority areas. The Working Groups would generate a “Position Paper” that would summarize existing knowledge/work (State of the Art), generate a plant science perspective to the problem, articulate what plant science can do to address the problem, and identify solutions that can be driven by plant community (either solutions that can be achieved with current knowledge or solutions that require additional research effort or both). The Working Groups would also determine what resources would be needed to deliver solutions, including (among other things) research, research infrastructure, education, and identification of the bottlenecks to innovation. Ultimately the Working Groups would make specific recommendations to those who have an influence on policy. The “Position Papers” would be targeted to several groups, including well informed politicians, consultative groups (e.g., CGIAR; CAST), international groups (UN; FAO), national/regional governments, foundations, and the GPC membership. It is expected that Working Groups will need to convene workshops to gather information and/or deliver the findings and recommendations.

Working Groups may take up to a year to establish and another year to deliver a report. The Council felt that a Working Group would consist of five to fifteen members and should be co-chaired by a member of the GPC Executive Committee. Working Group members would be assembled by an invited Chair (identified through nominations from the membership) in consultation with the GPC Executive Committee.

Interim Executive Committee: The Council felt that in order to assist the Executive Director in the efforts to establish the GPC as a legal entity, an interim Executive Committee should be established. This interim Executive Committee would be superseded following the scheduled election. The Council appointed the following members to the Interim Executive Committee: Prof. (American Society of Plant Biologists), Prof. Zhihong Xu (Chinese Society of Plant Biologists), Prof. Kazuo Shinozaki (Japanese Society of Plant Physiologists), Prof. Wilhelm Gruissem (European



Plant Science Organization), and Prof. Kasem Zaki Ahmed (African Crop Science Society).

Action Items: At the conclusion of the GPC meeting the following action items were agreed upon:

- 1) Generate a report of meeting for the membership societies
- 2) Draft article to be sent to all members for adaptation for their own society newsletters
- 3) Develop a budget – indicate “start up” costs versus annual operating costs
- 4) Develop a form for membership; commitment as “founding member” (membership dues – how much will they contribute?)
- 5) Build website using globalplantcouncil.org, which domain name was purchased by ASPB last August and which we will renew for another 3 years!
- 6) Develop Constitution and Bylaws documents that can be ratified by the GPC membership and used to register GPC. This draft would be checked by a lawyer in the country within which GPC would be registered.
- 7) Research the possible sites for registration of GPC: US?, Canada?, Switzerland?, or Finland?
- 8) Generate a call for nominations to the Executive Committee.

Next Global Council Meeting: The Chinese Society of Plant Biologists kindly volunteered to host the next Annual Meeting of the Global Plant Council in Shanghai. The meeting is tentatively scheduled for May or June 2011.

