

Memo to the Belmont Forum at the Oslo Meeting

Subject: Merger of IGFA and the Belmont Forum; proposed Structure and Terms of Reference

Purpose of Paper

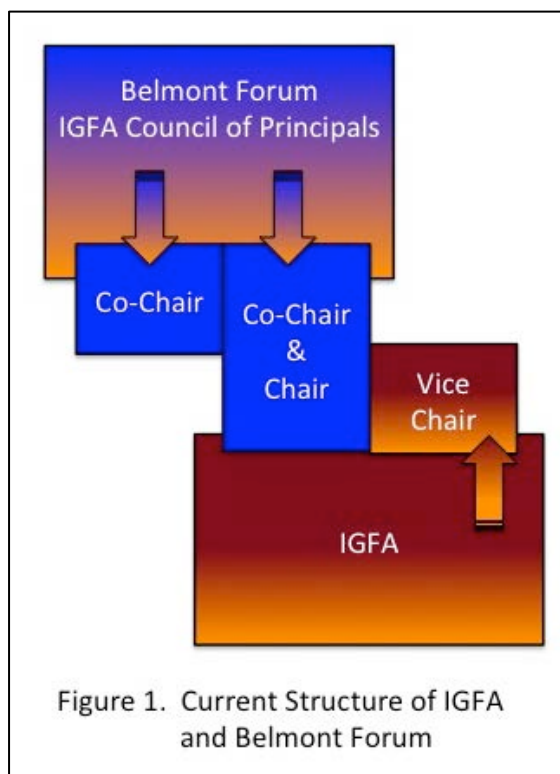
This paper outlines rationale for a merger of IGFA and Belmont Forum, and describes a new Structure and Terms of Reference for the Belmont Forum.

Belmont Forum and IGFA members are invited to:

1. Comment on the proposed terms of reference for the new structure
2. Adopt the new terms of reference

Background

At the IGFA Meeting in Paris, October 2009, the IGFA members agreed that the Belmont Forum would be the Council of Principals for IGFA. Revised Terms of Reference for the Council (Belmont Forum) and IGFA were adopted in Stockholm, 4-5 October 2012, then in Cape Town, 2-4 December 2013. Details of that structure (Figure 1.), and roles and responsibilities of the Belmont Forum and IGFA are contained in Annex A. The IGFA structure consisted of a Chair and Vice-Chair, each of whom served a two-year term that could be renewed once. The IGFA Vice-Chair was elected from the full IGFA membership whereas the IGFA Chair was elected from the membership of the Belmont Forum (Council) and served as one of the Co-Chairs of the Belmont Forum. This structure provided direct connection between the Belmont Forum (Council) and the larger IGFA membership.



At the IGFA and Belmont Forum meetings in Beijing, October 2014, the merger of IGFA and Belmont Forum was proposed and discussed. While IGFA and Belmont Forum members approved the merger in principle, they agreed that the proposed Terms of Reference needed significant revisions. It was agreed that the merger would continue, but that the Terms of Reference would be revised and formally approved at the 2015 Belmont Forum meeting.

The attached document reflects the changes discussed during the Beijing meeting and further changes discussed by the interim Steering Committee in view of proposing Terms of Reference for adoption by the Belmont Forum meeting in Oslo in October 2015.

Rationale

The previous IGFA/Belmont Forum structure was an important step toward increasing the functionality and impact of these groups; the larger IGFA community was able to develop, lead and participate in Belmont Forum Collaborative Research Actions, which have garnered kudos from the international global environmental change (GEC) research community. In addition, the success of the CRAs prompted several funding organizations and agencies to enquire about joining the Belmont Forum.

Under the previous structure, the Belmont Forum membership was limited to research funding organizations in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, European Commission, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, South Africa, UK, USA and to international research organizations: ICSU and ISSC.

Any new member would need to first be part of IGFA and then be elected onto the Belmont Forum. While this was possible - CNR (Italy) and SSEESS (Sweden) represented the IGFA membership, having replaced RCN (Norway) and BMWF (Austria), to the outside community, this procedure and the existence of two separate bodies was highly confusing.

In the meantime, many organizations wished to join the Belmont Forum because of the brand recognition and the desire to participate in the CRAs.

To alleviate the confusion and reduce the perceived barrier to directly joining the Belmont Forum, this paper proposes a merger of IGFA and Belmont Forum and the establishment of a new structure and Terms of Reference for the revised Belmont Forum.

This coincides with (i) the establishment of a permanent Belmont Forum secretariat, which marks a new departure for the Belmont Forum and (ii) the adoption of universally applicable sustainable development goals. The Belmont Forum's effectiveness and success will in great part be determined by the continued representation of members at high level with executive decision-making mandate.

The mission of the Belmont Forum could be formulated as creating the global collaboratory for research in support of environmentally sustainable development.

Transition Plan

In Beijing 2014, it was agreed that prior to the 2015 Belmont Forum meeting, Belmont Forum membership will be determined by the secretariat.

Members were to elect an interim Steering Committee through electronic means. This interim Steering Committee will operate until the next Belmont Forum meeting, at which time a full Steering Committee will be elected. One third of this Steering Committee will serve 1-year terms, one third will serve 2-year terms, and one third will serve 3-year terms. Thereafter, all Steering Committee members will serve 3-year terms, with one third rotating out each year.

The Steering Committee would elect an interim co-chair until the 2015 Belmont Forum meeting, when the second co-chair will be elected for a 3 year term. The term of the co-chair elected in Beijing 2014 will run for 3 years until the 2017 Belmont Forum meeting.

Belmont Forum Terms of Reference

Objectives

The Belmont Forum, with representation of members at high level with executive decision-making mandate, has identified for the global change research community and for the agencies that support such research, the overarching Belmont Challenge:

To deliver knowledge for prevention of and adaptation to environmental Change.

This Challenge requires regional and decadal prediction, advanced observing systems, and inclusion of social sciences; and recognition of the synergy of multiple stressors, including extreme events.

The Belmont Forum activity will be directed to joint actions leading to early-phase engagement by scientists, funders and key stakeholders on setting international strategies for transdisciplinary research and assigning priorities, leading to improved co-design with natural and social sciences, and alignment of international research in support of global policy frameworks such as the sustainable development goals. These actions are expected to leverage Members' domestic research programs and activities through international collaboration with at least 3 Belmont Forum Members.

These actions are directed toward the development of an integrated, multinational plan for short-term and long-term projects that focus on, but are not limited to:

- identifying emerging needs or issues;
- co-designing initiatives of global scope;
- developing a coordinated approach and consensus on action;
- developing ways to more effectively co-design and co-deliver solutions-oriented research agendas with stakeholders and communicate with a broader scientific and stakeholder community;
- maintaining dialogue with appropriate decision-makers, both in the public and private sectors, on global change research issues.

The Belmont Forum is an informal, voluntary partnership between funding bodies that share a commitment to jointly deliver on the Belmont Challenge.

Structure

The new proposed structure consists of 8 components:

1. Members
2. Partners
3. Observers
4. Steering Committee
5. Co-Chairs
6. Secretariat
7. CRA Theme Program Office(s)
8. Group(s) of Program Coordinators.

1. Members

Members are organizations that are legally allowed to mobilize resources from national or international research funds, either public or private, and are engaged in activities that address the Belmont Challenge (e.g. ministries for science and research, academy of sciences, scientific institutions and funding agencies, research foundations).

Members have (i) formally declared their commitment and willingness to actively contribute to Belmont Forum operations (with their work force, financial resources, and existing research and innovation investments, etc.), (ii) have participated in a CRA in conformity with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as a Belmont Forum partner, and (iii) contribute to the Belmont Forum secretariat, either through in-kind contribution or through an annual fee (defined on a yearly basis to support Secretariat staff and activities).

In order for a membership to be valid, a new member needs to be adopted by the plenary meeting.

The member organizations are represented by senior administrators (principals) or their properly mandated designees who can take executive decisions regarding the mobilization of resources to support Belmont activities, including but not limited to CRAs and support/contributions for the Secretariat.

Prior to becoming a Member, an organization can be invited by the steering committee to participate as observer.

The Members meet at least once every year to:

- a. Consider and adopt measures to establish, review, and update the policies and procedures of the Belmont Forum, as well as to evaluate its work and the accomplishment of its objectives;
- b. Review periodically and approve the scientific policy and agenda of the Belmont Forum and to consider and approve its long-range plans;
- c. Evaluate proposed Collaborative Research Actions and decide whether to be involved in scoping exercises;
- d. Pledge resources for approved Collaborative Research Actions;
- e. Evaluate Belmont Forum activities and recommend improvements;
- f. Elect the Members of the Steering Committee, including the co-chairs;
- g. Consider and approve the Rules of Procedure of the Steering Committee;
- h. Consider and approve the annual financial report and plan.
- i. Decide on the venue for its annual meeting, which shall be rotated among Members;
- j. Establish ad hoc committees or working groups as necessary; and
- k. Perform other functions as necessary to achieve the Belmont Forum objectives.

To ensure the quality of discussions and the involvement of the Belmont Forum members, the presence of at least 2/3 of the members constitutes the quorum necessary for a Belmont Forum meeting to be valid. Partners and observers are welcome at Belmont Forum meetings, but do not count toward to 2/3 quorum.

Insofar as possible, decisions of the Belmont Forum are taken by consensus. However, in the absence of consensus and following a commensurate proposal from the co-chairs, decisions are to be taken by simple majority vote of the members present.

Each principal designates a representative in his/her organisation to act as contact person for the Belmont Forum secretariat, to ensure regular follow-up of commitments taken and to participate in possible working groups or task teams run by the secretariat.

3. Partners

Partners are organizations that subscribe to the Belmont Challenge but do not fund research and/or do not have a vocation to meet the criteria for membership in the Belmont Forum. They can participate in one or more CRAs in so far as they sign or support the Belmont Forum MoU and principles. Accession of partners is subject to agreement by the members.

4. Observers

Observers are research funding organizations that have a vocation to become Belmont Forum member. They are invited by the co-chairs, in agreement with the Steering Committee.

5. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee supports, advises, and aligns the activities of the Co-Chairs. It does not make decisions on behalf of the Belmont Forum, but rather aids the implementation of decisions made at the annual Belmont Forum meetings.

It is composed of a number of representatives, around a quarter of the overall membership, with a minimum of 4 members. Representatives to the Steering Committee are elected by the Members for three-year terms renewable once. One third of its membership is renewed every year at the annual Belmont Forum meeting. New elected representatives to the Steering Committee come into office in January in the year following their election.

The Steering Committee shall meet in-person at least once a year in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Belmont Forum Members and virtually throughout the year as needed (at least 2 times a year).

The Steering Committee will:

- Develop recommendations on the policies of the Belmont Forum, for submission to and approval by Members;
- Ensure that the Co-Chairs and Secretariat implement the policies adopted by the Members and advise them accordingly, notably in cases where the co-chairs refer questions to the steering committee;
- Make recommendations to Members regarding Secretariat activities and the long-range plans and strategic planning;
- Make recommendations to Members regarding financial policies associated with supporting Secretariat functions and participating in CRA's;
- Make recommendations to Members regarding amendments to the governance documents (Rules of Procedure, of the Steering Committee, ToR, MoU, etc.);

- Propose to Members the designation of new Members, Partners and Observers; and
- Perform any other functions entrusted to it by Members;
- Elect an interim Co-Chair if a Co-Chair leaves their position in between the annual Belmont Forum meetings.

Insofar as possible, decisions of the Steering Committee will be taken by consensus. However, in the absence of consensus, decisions are referred to members.

6. Co-Chairs

The Belmont Forum's Members will elect 2 Co-Chairs from the Steering Committee for three-year terms renewable once. One of the Co-Chairs is expected to represent a Member from a country not belonging to the G7.

To ensure continuity, rotation of the Belmont Forum co-Chairs will be staggered by one year. A new elected Co-Chair will take office in January following his/her election.

If a Co-Chair should leave their organization during their term, the organization's replacement does not automatically assume the position of Belmont Forum Co-Chair. Rather, the Steering Committee will elect an interim Co-Chair who will serve until a new Co-Chair can be elected at the next Belmont Forum meeting.

The role and responsibility of the co-chairs are:

- To prepare the agenda of the Belmont Forum and Steering Committee meetings, in consultation of the Steering Committee and assisted by the Secretariat, and to moderate and lead through the meetings' discussion from a neutral position with the objective to integrate different perspectives.
- To act as spokespersons of the Belmont Forum and to formally represent the Belmont Forum to external bodies, including the S&T Alliance for Global Sustainability and Future Earth, based on the positions formulated by the Steering Committee.
- To guarantee the continuous communication and information flows within the Belmont Forum, assisted by the Secretariat.

7. Secretariat

The Secretariat will be the primary administrative element of the Belmont Forum and will be composed of a Director and staff.

The Secretariat insures the links between co-Chairs, the Belmont Forum Members, the Working Group Members, the Groups of Program Coordinators (GPC) and Theme Project Offices (TPO) in charge of running the various Collaborative Research Actions.

The secretariat implements the decisions taken at the annual Belmont Forum meetings. It works under the guidance and instructions of the co-chairs and is accountable to the Steering Committee.

The Secretariat Director is appointed by the Steering Committee for a 3-year period and reports to the co-Chairs and the Steering Committee. He/she leads and manages the Secretariat, which is geographically distributed (Secretariat members can be located in the offices of any members'

organizations) with the Director hosted at ANR, Paris.

The Secretariat interacts through electronic communication means and meets physically at least once a year back-to-back, before and after, with the annual Belmont Forum meeting. Travel expenses of Secretariat members based in the central node of the secretariat are supported by the Secretariat budget.

Appointment of Secretariat staff is managed in consultation and in agreement with the Secretariat Director. The Secretariat staff works directly under the Secretariat Director's authority and reports to the Secretariat Director.

Each co-Chair is supported by an assistant from his/her staff to ease interactions between the co-Chairs and the Secretariat Director. A co-Chair's assistant is formally not part of the Secretariat and remains under the responsibility and authority of the co-Chair.

The Belmont Forum Secretariat and the Future Earth Secretariat are independent. However, if relevant, some secretariat activities can be coordinated with the Future Earth Secretariat.

8. Theme Program Offices (TPO) and Groups of Program Coordinators (GPC)

A "Theme Program Office" (TPO) is established by one of the Partner Organizations' Head Offices which, for the entire period of a CRA implementation, is entrusted by the Partner Organizations to prepare, publish, and manage activities decided in the framework of the CRA, in cooperation and consultation with the Group of Program Coordinators.

A "Group of Program Coordinators" (GPC) is responsible for the practical implementation of a given CRA. It is composed of one mandated representative from each Partner Organization participating in the CRA, who provides overall responsibility for her/his Organization's involvement in the CRA.

Conflict of Interest Rules

Belmont Forum meetings are open to all Members, Partners, Observers, and invited guests. However, if a party is conflicted with an agenda item, it is the responsibility of that party to identify their conflict and recuse themselves for the duration of the discussion. The Co-Chairs are responsible for enforcing this Conflict of Interest rule.

Potential Principal Investigators (PIs) may participate in scoping workshops, but may not be involved in drafting any part of the call text.

ANNEX A

Terms of Reference for the Council of Principals of the International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change Research (IGFA)

Approved at the IGFA Annual Meeting, December 2013, Cape Town, South Africa

Council's membership and role

The IGFA Council of Principals (*hereafter referred to as the Council or the Belmont Forum¹*) is composed of:

- Senior administrators from member agencies active in the funding of global change research (Australia, Canada, the European Commission, France, Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America);
- Senior representatives of science funding bodies from some newly industrialized countries (presently, but not limited to, Brazil, China, India, and South Africa);
- Two members elected by IGFA from organisations that are not Council members from the above two categories to each serve for a two-year term that can be renewed once;
- The Executive Director of the International Council for Science (ICSU); and
- The Executive Director of the International Social Sciences Council (ISSC).

The member agencies, science funding bodies, IGFA, ICSU and ISSC should ensure that their members on the Council are identified/confirmed prior to or at the beginning of each Council meeting.

The Council is the senior consultative and policy-oriented body in IGFA. Its role is to:

- Identify strategic priorities for international collaboration on global change research (GCR); and
- Identify approaches to address these priorities.

Council's objectives and activities

The Council (Belmont Forum) has identified, for the global change research community and for the agencies that support such research, the overarching Belmont Challenge:

To Deliver Knowledge to Support Human Action and Adaptation to Regional Environmental Change.

The Council recognizes that to address this challenge requires regional and decadal prediction, advanced observing systems, and inclusion of social sciences; and recognition of the synergy of multiple stressors, including extreme events, for, in particular (but not limited to):

- coastal zones;
- water cycle and water resources;
- ecosystem services - food security;

¹ For the purpose of this document, the terms "Council" and "Belmont Forum" shall be used interchangeably and they both refer to one and the same body.

- carbon cycling; and
- most vulnerable societies.

The activities of the Belmont Forum will be directed to joint activities leading to early-phase engagement by scientists and funders on setting international strategies and assigning priorities, leading to improved co-design and alignment of international research. The Council's actions are expected to complement and be underpinned by the ongoing actions of the full IGFA membership (including sharing of GCR information and best practices; dialogue with international GCR programmes and intergovernmental GCR offices; and coordinating collaborations or funding partnerships in these areas).

These actions are directed to development of an integrated, multinational plan for short-term and long-term projects. This plan would constitute the core of IGFA's strategy and the foci would include:

- identifying emerging needs or issues;
- co-designing one or more initiatives of global scope;
- developing a coordinated approach and consensus on action;
- developing ways to communicate more effectively with stakeholders and the broader scientific community; and
- maintaining a dialogue with appropriate decision makers on GCR issues.

The Council will meet at regular intervals, at least annually, preferably back-to-back with the annual IGFA meeting in October and, as necessary, more frequently. The meetings will be oriented to concrete action and measurable outcomes to address the Belmont Challenge.

Both Council and full IGFA meetings will be scheduled as much as possible in conjunction with major meetings of international bodies concerned with GCR. The Council and the full IGFA may invite representatives of other bodies to participate in its meetings and other activities as appropriate.

The Council and the full IGFA will be supported by a small Working Group composed of senior staff to Council and IGFA Members. These staff members will be volunteered by the Members to serve on the Working Group. The Co-Chairs will select and support the Working Group Chair. The Working Group may invite experts to participate in its work to obtain broad input to activities of the Council and the full IGFA.

During the period between the plenary meetings, the IGFA, Council, their Co-Chairs and Vice Chair will maintain their focus and momentum through vigorous proactive and reciprocal communications activities, through meetings of the Council, and through occasional meetings drawn from the larger membership around specific themes, with the support of the Working Group.

The full IGFA will be encouraged to align their actions with, and provide input to, the development and implementation of the above plan. The Council will invite input from the full IGFA to the development of this plan, and to other issues to be addressed by the Council. Full IGFA meetings will normally take place annually, but not less frequently than every two years. Additional meetings may be convened by the Co-Chairs in response to special needs.

Council's member key responsibilities

Although contributions are on a voluntary basis, Council members are expected to contribute to, participate in, and support actions such as:

- Hosting Belmont Forum and or joint Belmont Forum-IGFA meetings. Generally the cost of travel to and from Belmont Forum meetings and accommodation are borne by individual members;
- Providing funding support for selective Collaborative Research Actions (CRAs) and other initiatives launched by the Belmont Forum;
- Taking the administrative lead in some CRAs launched through the Belmont Forum (i.e. assign the *Theme Programme Officer*). This entails arranging and hosting any scoping workshop(s), preparing the call documentation, launching the call, receiving proposals as well as driving the necessary peer review processes. Usually one or two agencies collaborate in driving a particular CRA on behalf of the Belmont Forum. This is a substantial commitment which will require dedicated staff commitments and should not be underestimated;
- Ensuring that Belmont Forum calls and initiatives are adequately communicated to local science communities to ensure maximum local participation. Hosting team building workshops for local scientists with other international partners may be required to submit competitive proposals;
- Contributing to the Belmont Forum Working Group activities by allocating an appropriate resource(s) to function as a standing member of the Belmont Forum Working Group;
- Supporting the travel and meeting obligations of Belmont Forum and Working Group members;
- Striving to co-opt other funding agencies and initiatives and opportunities into appropriate Belmont Forum CRAs to increase the impact of the Belmont Forum investments.

IGFA and Belmont Forum's chairing

The Council will have two Co-Chairs. IGFA will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair, each of whom will serve for a two-year term that can be renewed once. The IGFA Chair will also serve as Co-Chair of the Council. The IGFA Chair will be elected from the membership of the Council, while the Vice-Chair can be elected from the full IGFA membership. The Council will elect its other Co-Chair for a two-year term renewable once. To ensure continuity rotation of the Belmont Forum co-Chairs will be staggered by one year. The Co-Chairs will take office 6 months after their election while the IGFA Vice-Chair will take office immediately after election. Elections will be organized at IGFA meetings to ensure continuity in IGFA and Council leadership.

The Chair is expected to provide overall leadership for IGFA; bring emerging new issues to the agenda; propose initiatives for priority setting; and make proposals for achievement of common goals.

Members who wish to be considered for IGFA Chair, Vice-Chair or Belmont Forum Co-Chair will be required to express their interest to the Belmont Forum secretariat in response to a call for nominations. Nominations of prospective Chair, Vice-Chair or Co-Chair must be accompanied or followed shortly after submission of nomination, by a letter from the nominee confirming willingness to serve in the position nominated for. The call for nominations will be posted prior to the annual joint IGFA-Belmont Forum meeting.

Rotating Belmont Forum's members

IGFA members who wish to be considered for rotating membership of the Council will be required to express their interest to the Belmont Forum secretariat in response to a general IGFA Council rotating membership call. Nominations of prospective rotating members must be accompanied or followed shortly after submission of nomination, by a letter from the nominee confirming willingness to sit on the Council as a rotating member. This call will be posted prior to the annual joint IGFA-Belmont Forum meeting. The full IGFA membership will participate in electing the new rotating Belmont Forum members at the meeting that will be held one year before the end of term of the members rotating out. New rotating members will take office at the next annual IGFA meeting, and will be eligible to participate and attend BF meetings.

Should there be need to extend the period of membership of a rotating member beyond the regulatory two years, a consultative and consensus process within the Council of Principals will be used.

The rotating members should represent non-BF IGFA members at BF meetings; in particular project their proposition or participation within BF activities. It requires that the rotating members communicate and collect feedbacks from non-BF IGFA members before and after each BF meeting.

The rotating members are expected to actively contribute, on their own behalf and on behalf of non-BF IGFA members, to the objectives and activities of the Belmont Forum. Moreover, as Belmont Forum members, they have the same responsibilities as the permanent BF members (see above).