



9th Belmont Forum Meeting

Beijing, China. 10 October 2014

Meeting Report

1. Attendance

Members attending in person: Albert van Jaarsveld (NRF, South Africa); Patrick Monfray (ANR, France); Yucheng Chai (NSFC, China); Johannes Karte (DFG, Germany); Satoru Ohtake (JST, Japan); Magnus Tannerfeldt (SSEESS, Sweden); Heide Hackmann (ISSC); Kurt Vandenberghe (European Commission).

Members represented: Carlos Henrique de Brito Cruz (FAPESP, Brazil) represented by Gilberto Camara; Wilfried Kraus (BMBF, Germany) represented by Kristin May; Shailesh Nayak (MoES, India) represented by Swati Basu; Enrico Brugnoli (ISAC-CNR, Italy) represented by Elisa Palazzi; Satoshi Tanaka (MEXT, Japan) represented by Akira Takagi; Duncan Wingham (NERK, UK) represented by Sophie Hodgson; Roger Wakimoto (NSF, USA) represented by Maria Uhle.

Apologies: Andrew Johnson (CSIRO, Australia); Pierre Charest (NSERC, Canada); ICSU representative.

Guests and Observers: Shiho Hamada (JST, Japan); Hiroshi Tsuda (JST, Japan), Kazuhiko Aoki (JST, Japan); Yonah Seleti (Department of Science and Technology, South Africa); Ingrid Petersson (Formas, Sweden), Sofie Bjorling (Formas, Sweden), Kerstin Sahlin (Swedish RC, Sweden).

BF Working Group: Reynaldo Victoria (FAPESP, Brazil); Yongtao Zhang (NSFC, China); Sandrine Paillard (ANR, France); Christiane Joerk (DFG, Germany); Soichi Kubota (JST, Japan); Andrew Kaniki (NRF, South Africa); Ntombizini Manana (NRF, South Africa); Ellenor Devine (SSEESS, Sweden); David Allen (USGCRP, USA); Kelly Watson (NSF, USA); Marialuisa Tamborra (European Commission); Sarah Moore (ISSC).

NSFC Hosts: Congqiang Liu, Yu Liu, Jianguo Ren, Zhe Liu, Chuang Zhao, Yu Chen

2. Welcome and Introduction

The Belmont Forum Co-Chairs, Dr. Patrick Monfray and Dr. Albert van Jaarsveld, opened the meeting with welcome remarks. They explained that the meeting would focus mainly on:

- The proposed new Terms of Reference for IGFA and the Belmont Forum;
- The proposed Belmont Forum Permanent Secretariat;
- Decisions and actions deriving from the proceedings of the IGFA meeting that had taken place on 8-9 October 2014, especially as regards 2015 and 2016 CRAs;
- Progress report of the ongoing CRAs; and
- The election of a new Belmont Forum co-chair.

3. Adoption of the Meeting Agenda

[Ref. Document BF 14-0]

The Co-Chairs proposed an additional session to discuss Conflict of Interest rules. This session was inserted before the "Presentation of the Nominations for the Role of BF Co-Chair."

Decision BF9-01: To adopt the agenda of the 9th Belmont Forum meeting as amended above.

4. Adoption of the Cape Town Meeting Report

[Ref. Document BF 14-1]

Decision BF9-02: To adopt the report of the 8th Belmont Forum Meeting as a true reflection of the proceedings of the meeting held in Cape Town, South Africa on 04 December 2013

5. Conflict of Interest

The representatives from ISSC and from the Future Earth interim secretariat, as non research funding agency per se, were asked to leave the room by the co-chairs for this session, due to a perceived conflict of interest. Maria Uhle, from NSF, expressed her discomfort with this request. Members discussed Conflict of Interest guidelines for both Belmont Forum meetings and the Belmont Forum scoping process. The following new rules were proposed:

- Potential Principle Investigators (PIs) may participate in Belmont Forum scoping workshops, but they may not be involved in drafting the call text. The final session of each scoping workshop will be restricted to funding agencies only.
- PIs should not be selected as reviewers or Panel of Expert members during the merit-review process.
- Belmont Forum meetings will be open and conflicts of interest will be dealt with at the agenda item level. If there is a conflict of interest, the conflicted individuals should leave the room during that agenda item.
- It is the responsibility of the conflicted parties to recuse themselves during the appropriate agenda items.
- It is the responsibility of the co-chairs to determine whether there is a conflict of interest for each agenda item and to enforce the conflict of interest rules.

Decision BF9-03: To draft the Conflict of Interest rules just discussed into the new Terms of Reference.

Decision BF9-04: To implement the Conflict of Interest rules with immediate effect.

6. Presentation of the Nominations for the Role of BF Co-Chair

Both of the current co-chairs need to be replaced in 2015. Albert will be leaving his position at NRF in January. The secretariat asked for nomination to replace Albert last year, but both nominations from FAPESP and MoES were withdrawn. At the Cape Town meeting, Patrick's term was extended one year, to April 2015. There is one nomination to replace Patrick - Kurt Vandenberghe from the European Commission.

Kurt presented his vision for his term as co-chair, then left the room while the other members discussed the nominee. The co-chairs suggested that Kurt begin his term in February, when Albert leaves, instead of when Patrick steps down. There was also a discussion of what should happen if a co-chair leaves his/her position in the middle of a term. It was decided that the co-chairs' replacement at their organization should not automatically become the new co-chair of the Belmont Forum.

Decision BF9-05: To add to the Terms of Reference: If a co-chair leaves his/her position and no longer belongs to a member organization, there will be a new election to replace him/her.

The Steering Committee will elect an interim co-chair that will serve until the next plenary meeting.

Decision BF9-06: To unanimously elect Kurt Vandenberghe as a new Belmont Forum co-chair, to assume his role on February 1st, 2015.

7. Proposed New IGFA/BF Terms of Reference and Transition Plan

[Ref. Document IGFA14-2]

The Belmont Forum endorsed the decision made at the IGFA meeting on 08 October 2014 to merge IGFA and the Belmont Forum.

It was noted that the Conflict of Interest rules and the rule about the election of interim co-chairs discussed earlier in the meeting should be added to the Terms of Reference.

The following transition procedures were proposed:

- The list of prospective Belmont Forum members will be defined by the co-chairs and circulated by the secretariat.
- From this list, members will elect an interim Steering Committee, which will take effect immediately. The co-chairs will be part of the interim Steering Committee and the latter will arrange for a proper Steering Committee and co-chair election to be run at the 2015 Belmont Forum meeting.
- The interim Steering Committee will elect an interim co-chair for when Patrick steps down.
- In June 2015, the interim Steering Committee will ask for nominations for the new co-chair.
- The interim Steering Committee will hold discussions with ICSU and ISSC concerning their status as associate members.

In the future, co-chairs elected at October meetings will assume their roles the following January.

Decision BF9-07: To merge IGFA with Belmont Forum, and keep only the last name.

Decision BF9-08: To keep the Terms of Reference as a working document until the 2015 Belmont Forum meeting.

Decision BF9-10: To remove the section on the Secretariat from the Terms of Reference.

Decision BF9-11: To have two co-chairs for the Belmont Forum, with three-year terms renewable once. There shall be a one-year lag between the elections of the two co-chairs.

Decision BF9-12: To have a rotating Steering Committee with three-year terms renewable once. Election of the Steering Committee will be staggered.

Decision BF9-13: To follow the transition procedures outlined above in 2015.

8. Permanent Secretariat Proposal

[Ref. Document BF14-2 and BF14-3]

The proposed permanent secretariat would have three main functions:

- Supporting the co-chairs and the Steering Committee, as assisted by the BF Working Group. This includes administrative tasks, such as working with the hosts of the next Belmont Forum meeting; overseeing activities, coordinating activities between the secretariat, BF Working Group, and Theme Program Offices (attached to each CRA); providing financial reports to the Belmont Forum; and designing and developing monitoring systems, in conjunction with the BF Working Group.
- Value-enhancing and forward-looking activities, including organizing scientific events; being a resource for the BF Working Group; and possibly supporting publications.

- Communications, including maintenance of the portal and implementing strategies to expand membership and partnership.

To fund the secretariat, NSF and the European Commission would provide 1 FTE each, ANR would provide 20% equivalent of the current director's salary, and the remainder of the secretariat expenses would be paid through cash donations from Belmont Forum members. A minimum support by each member will be determined on an annual basis.

The co-chairs reminded everyone that the proposal for a permanent secretariat had already been approved at the Cape Town meeting and that it is now a question of funding and operationalizing it by January 1st, 2015.

All the members fundamentally agreed with the proposal, but noted that it needed clarification on the following points:

- It is not the secretariat's job to plan Belmont Forum activities.
- Some of the tasks currently assigned to the secretariat are better suited for the co-chairs and the Steering Committee: "Plan and oversee" and "Value-enhancing and Forward-looking Activities" should be deleted from the proposal. Similarly, communication and partnership are better suited for the BF Working Group. The secretariat will participate and assist in these activities, but it should not be the driver.
- Coordination cash should not be used to build an IT system. The secretariat may be the custodian of such monitoring systems, but the BF Working Group should set up these systems.
- The proposal should be clear on the tax situation for the secretariat director. Note that there will be a contract for money transfer between Agency and ANR, or if appropriate IIASA and ANR, but the secretariat director will be an employee of ANR.
- This proposal is for a three-year secretariat, renewable. The work "Permanent" should be removed from the document.

Some members noted that in order for them to contribute to the secretariat, they will need to see a revised proposal from the interim Steering Committee and an invoice from ANR or IIASA. Once members reaffirm their commitments, the revised proposal will be circulated and invoices will be distributed.

It was also noted that the proposal for secretariat functions and funding should be removed from the Terms of Reference proposal.

Decision BF9-14: To refine the secretariat tasks currently labelled as "Value-Enhancing and Forward-Looking Activities" and "Communication and Partnership."

Decision BF9-15: To clarify the respective roles of the secretariat and BF Working Group members

Decision BF9-16: To circulate a revised secretariat proposal before confirming contributions and funding channels.

Decision BF9-17: To remove "Permanent" from the proposal.

Decision BF9-18: To operationalize the secretariat by January 1st, 2015.

Decision BF9-19: To open a call for the position of Secretariat Director.

9. CRAs: Proposals for 2015 Actions

9.1 E-Infrastructures and Data Management CRA

[Ref. Document IGFA14-8.1 and IGFA14-8.2]

The E-Infrastructures secretariat has been doing a wonderful job of leading this group of over 100 experts. The Interim Report they produced for this meeting outlines some early short-term recommendations that may be implemented by the Belmont Forum.

Belmont Forum members were very supportive of this CRA and many expressed their continued support of the secretariat's work. In terms of the specific recommendations provided in the Interim Report:

- There was interest in developing a Data Management Plan template.
- Members saw the value of case studies and exemplars, especially if they were to focus on reproducible science.
- There was less enthusiasm for creating new CRAs for the legal and security working groups and online training.
- The Belmont Forum will need more documentation in order to take the next steps.

The co-chairs noted that the Belmont Forum should think about how to best leverage this group of experts in the long term and what the Belmont Forum hopes to achieve through this CRA.

Decision BF9-20: To extend the deadline for the E-Infrastructures and Data Management Final Report to June 30th, 2015.

Action BF9-01: NSF and NERC will pass on the congratulatory comments of Belmont Forum members to the E-Infrastructure secretariat.

Action BF9-02: The GPC will be more involved in the CRA in the future, and will clarify their expectations to the E-infrastructure Steering Committee.

9.2 Mountains as Sentinels of Change CRA

[Ref. Document IGFA14-7.1]

A Call for Proposals and a community-driven scoping exercise for a Mountain Observing System were proposed. Note that funding for the call would be for 2016.

Tentative funding commitments for the Call for Proposals were made by: CNR (0.5 M€), NSF (2.1 M€), BMWFW (in-kind), NSFC (1 M€), DFG (1.5 M€), FAPESP (1 M€), ANR (1 to 1.5 M€), and NERC (1.3 M€). The TPOs for this CRA will be CNR and NSF.

The following organizations expressed interest in pursuing the Mountain Observing System exercise: CNR, NSF, DFG, NERC, Allenvi (tbc), and NSFC.

Decision BF9-21: To open a competitive call for proposals in the first quarter of 2015.

Action BF9-03: The Theme Programme Offices for this CRA will follow up on confirmation of participation and funding commitments by Belmont Forum members and other partners.

Action BF9-04: The GPC will refine the call text in order to reduce the scope of the call. The call should focus on transdisciplinarity and the Belmont Challenge.

9.3 Climate Services CRA

[Ref. Document IGFA14-7.2]

The proposed Call for Proposals would focus on three topics: understanding past and current variability and trends of regional extremes; predictability and prediction skills for near-future variability and trends of regional extremes; and co-construction of near term forecast products with users.

The proposal included two types of research projects (networking / capacity building and mediums-size research projects). It was decided to remove the networking / capacity building type.

Tentative funding commitments were made by: ANR (1.5 to 2 M€), MoES (1.5 to 2 M€), RCN and NWO (with JPI Climate), FAPESP (1 M€), MEXT/JST (0.5 M€), NRF (0.25 M€), NSF (0.75 M€), NSFC (1 M€), JPI Climate (tbc), Qatar Foundation (tbc), NERC (0.3 M€ for topic 1), BMBF (through JPI Climate, pending JPI decision), FRQ (500K CDN). JPI Climate partners will be identified and confirmed at next GB in Oslo, November 25-26, 2014. ANR and MoES are leading the call.

Decision BF9-22: To open a competitive call for proposals in the first quarter of 2015, with type 1 (networking grants) removed.

Action BF9-05: The Theme Programme Offices for this CRA will follow up on confirmation of participation and funding commitments by Belmont Forum members and other partners and will identify which funders can support developing countries.

9.4 Transformations to Sustainability

[Ref. Document IGFA14-7.3]

At this point, this program will not be implemented as a Belmont Forum activity; however, the following organizations expressed interest in supporting the program in 2015: FAPESP (tbc), MEXT/JST (0.5 M€), BMBF (0.5 to 1 M€ tbc), NSF (0.25 M€ tbc), and NRF (TPO).

For a 2016 call, there was interest from EC through ERANET (3 M€), possibly ANR and Swedish partners beyond SIDA.

Action BF9-06: EC will organize a scoping workshop to prepare a possible 2016 call.

9.5 Transdisciplinary Workshops

[Ref. Document IGFA14-7.4]

At this point, this program will not be implemented as a Belmont Forum activity; however, the following organizations expressed interest in supporting the program in 2015: NRF (0.250 M€ – will run the call), AllEnvi (in-kind for workshops, tbc), MEXT/JST (0.5 M€), NSF (travel and subsistence for US participants up to 0.1 M€), and EC (in-kind for workshops, tbc).

10. Updates on On-going CRAs

10.1 Arctic Observing and Research for Sustainability

[Ref. Document BF14-4.1]

The Panel of Experts will be held in the US in November, 2014. It is noted that a completed CRA handbook should be used to guideline CRAs and insure coherence and quality of procedures.

Some members noted that funding decisions will need to be made during the panel because some agencies need to commit 2014 funds for this CRA.

The TPO (NSF) will communicate with the EC because they have made Arctic awards, but not announced them yet. We should avoid PIs double-dipping.

10.2 Coastal Vulnerability

The mid-project meeting was held at the Deltas in Times of Change conference, Rotterdam, September 2014. EC projects were also represented at the meeting, which produced a lot of positive feedback from PIs. GPC members who attended the mid-project meeting were pleasantly surprised at how well the project had engaged social scientists and stakeholders.

10.3 Freshwater Security

The mid-project meeting will be held at the AGU fall meeting in December 2014, following the format used by the Coastal Vulnerability CRA.

10.4 Food Security and Land Use Change

The CRA received twelve type-1 proposals, three of which were funded. Thirty-four type-2 proposals were received. Only twenty-two were eligible, and eight were invited to submit full proposals. A virtual panel was convened to evaluate the eight full proposals, which presented a lot of technical difficulties. The GPC had decided to fund four proposals.

The TPO (FAPESP) encountered many challenges in implementing this CRA. They suggested that future CRAs use joint TPOs from two organizations. Completion of the CRA Handbook would also be helpful, as yet mentioned for CRA Arctic.

Decision BF9-23: To communicate to future Panels of Experts of CRAs that they should not numerically rank proposals, but just grade to allow flexibility for GPC to maximise country participation and budget use.

Decision BF9-24: To ensure that the GPC checks eligibility of all [pre-]proposals before informing PIs.

Action BF9-07: The secretariat should ensure the quality of CRA delivery.

10.5 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

[Ref. Document BF14-4.2]

This was a call for networking proposal only. A workshop will be held in 18-24 months to explore opportunities for a second call for full research projects. Only seven eligible proposals were received, but they were for very big networks. Additional eligibility problems have been discovered after the proposals were received. However, four networks were recommended for funding. Projects should start on January 2015.

The panel of experts noted that many of these proposals were not particularly innovative, since many of the PIs already knew each other.

A second call, in conjunction with Eranet Biodiversa, was proposed for 2017. This may double the pot of money for some agencies. The EC noted that it needs to know by the summer of 2015 if this call will go forward.

11. Ideas for New CRAs

11.1 Urban Pathways, Nexus, Consumption, and Tipping Points

[Ref. Documents IGFA14-5.1, IGFA14-5.2, IGFA14-5.3, IGFA14-5.4]

There was a lot of interest from Belmont Forum members in the Urban, Nexus, and Consumption CRA proposals, but also a lot of overlap between the three topics. In general, members thought that these were very broad proposals. It was proposed to combine the three topics and scope them together in a Global Urbanization CRA.

In the future, it would be helpful if Future Earth had a mechanism to identify potential lead agencies for their proposed CRAs.

Decision BF9-25: To hold a one-week scoping workshop on Global Urbanization issues, including combined Nexus-Consumption-Urban topics. NSF, assisted by JST, will lead the scoping exercise; all members are interested.

Decision BF9-26: To ask Future Earth for clarification of the scientific scope of the Tipping Points proposal.

11.2 Future Earth Fast Track Initiatives

[Ref. Document IGFA14-5.5]

Decision BF9-27: To wait to see the outcomes of the NSF-funded round of FTIs before funding another round.

Action BF9-08: The co-chairs will work with Future Earth Executive to prepare a proposal for the 2015 Belmont Forum meeting on a competitive process of Future Earth initiatives.

11.3 Future Earth Early Career Researcher and IIASA International School of Excellence

[Ref. Documents IGFA14-5.6, IGFA14-5.7]

These two proposals were somewhat related. Additionally, many members had a lot of questions about the proposals, and it was decided that they were not quite mature enough for Belmont Forum funding. However, training initiatives should be an important part of the Belmont Forum.

The following agencies all expressed interest in pursuing training initiatives: NRF, FAPESP, NSF, NSFC, ANR, JST/MEXT, and RCN

Decision BF9-28: To seek further clarification on both of these proposals and to ask that they are refined to fit within the Belmont Forum process.

11.4 Critical Zone of the Earth

[Ref. Document IGFA14-5.8]

There was broad interest in this topic, but the focus on natural science made it not quite mature enough for a Belmont Forum activity.

Decision BF9-29: To encourage agencies interested in pursuing the Critical Zone of the Earth to work together outside of the Belmont Forum.