



MARKETING INFORMATION ORGANIZATION OF THE
AMERICAS
MIOA

**8th. Ordinary Executive Committee Meeting
San Jose, Costa Rica**

March 27, 2007

List of participants

1. Terry Long, President
2. Marco Moscoso, Vice President and Representative from the Central and Caribbean Region
3. Andrea Dansa, Representative from the Southern Region
4. Pedro Martinez, President Ex Oficio
5. Adriana Senior, Representative from the Andean Region
6. Hernan Velasquez, Representative from Ecuador, the host country for 2007
7. Luis F. Palmer, USDA
8. Miguel Garcia, IICA (Technical Secretariat)
9. Frank Lam, IICA (Technical Secretariat)
10. Carlos Tellez
11. Arlyne Alfaro

Mr. Terry Long, President of OIMA, presided the meeting under the following agenda:

08:30	Call to order	Terry Long, President of OIMA
	Welcoming Remarks	Dr. Chelston Brathwaite, Director General, IICA
	Approval of the agenda	
	Central American Region Project Proposal	Arlyne Alfaro
	Update of action items from the last meeting	Frank Lam
10:30	Break	
10:50	Discussion on the legal framework OIMA	Adriana Senior
	Update on 2007 Regular Meeting	Hernan Velasquez
	Budget update	Frank Lam
	Administrators Workshop	Terry Long
12:30	Lunch	
13:30	Regional reports	
	Discussion of the report by Dr. Mendoza	
	Technical assistance projects	
15:00	Break	
15:20	Strategic action plan/plan of work 2008 Regular Meeting Next Executive Committee meeting	
17:30	Close of meeting	

1.1. **Welcoming remarks**

1.1.1. **Dr. Chelston Brathwaite** welcomed the members of the MIOA Executive Committee (EC).

1.1.2. **Mr. Terry Long**, thanked Dr. Brathwaite on behalf of OIMA for his hospitality and for the support received from IICA.

1.2. **Approval of the agenda**

1.2.1. **Mr. Terry Long** presented to the EC the agenda of the meeting for its approval. The EC approved the agenda and the session was initiated.

1.3. **Central American Region Project Proposal**

1.3.1. **Mrs. Arlyne Alfaro**, on behalf of the Central American and Caribbean Region, presented a proposal for a Market Intelligence Project. This Project consists of creating a Market Intelligence System for Central America, presently known as SINCA. The objective of this system is to increase and strengthen agribusinesses in the Central American vegetable and fruit sector by developing a regional market intelligence system that will allow for the identification of new opportunities in national and international markets and for the development of sustainable commercial strategies. The project includes three main objectives: a) access to specialized sources of agricultural information to create a common regional information system for the different intelligence systems in Central America. b) Capacity building in the area of human resources and technologies; and c) outreach to decision makers and links to users. **Mr. Long** opened the floor for questions.

1.3.2. **Mr. Marco Moscoso** acknowledged the work performed by Mrs. Alfaro, IICA and other collaborators in preparing the proposal. He suggested including the Dominican Republic since the seven countries that make up the Central America and Caribbean Region should be represented. Thus, he urged Mrs. Alfaro to decide on this issue.

1.3.3. **Mrs. Adriana Senior** said that the proposed budget was insufficient for the proposal that was put forth. Additionally, she indicated that there were no counterpart funds to sustain the proposal. Finally, she suggested reassessing the proposal, and including financial support from member countries.

1.3.4. **Mrs. Alfaro** reported that currently no country pays subscription fees with the exception of Costa Rica. Most of them use free information that is available on the Internet. For that reason the proposal focused on purchasing information. Likewise, she clarifies that IICA would not manage the database.

- 1.3.5. **Mr. Pedro Martinez** congratulated Mrs. Alfaro on her presentation and said that he endorsed this regional initiative. However, he expressed concern at: a) the sustainability of the project; and b) human capabilities. He added that the most important element was the preparation of technical profiles for the professionals that would be in charge of analyzing and delivering information to member countries.
- 1.3.6. **Mr. Long** asked how they had arrived at the amount of sixty thousand dollars in subscription fees. He asked if they had used any model.
- 1.3.7. **Mrs. Alfaro** explained that ten thousand dollars were estimated for each country. Additionally, she indicated that the project considered training analysts through regional workshops and proposed using the meeting that would be held that week to give continuity to the action plan.
- 1.3.8. **Mr. Long** said that Mr. Martinez mentioned human capabilities as one of the most critical elements. A case in point: the USDA has been monitoring markets since the beginning of the last century, before there were any means for disseminating information. Thus, the idea of strengthening the human resource is quite practical. Technology should be in second place.
- 1.3.9. **Mr. Miguel Garcia** said that two aspects needed to be understood. First, that this project was initiated four years ago, as a result of the Puebla Panama Program. Then, during the III International Fruit Forum, held in Costa Rica, the project became more relevant. Second, that other regional mechanisms were interested in the project. For this reason, it was necessary to redefine the objectives. The budget should be the last issue to be discussed. Also, Mr. Garcia said that the EC should express its support to this initiative. In his capacity as a member of the Technical Secretariat he suggested that the Executive Committee of OIMA agreed to support this initiative as a partner. And once the final project was ready, they could determine what would be their contribution.
- 1.3.10. **Mr. Long** thanked Mr. Garcia for his comments and asked if there were any other comments or questions. **Mrs. Senior** said that OIMA should be used to leverage resources from third parties for funding such an initiative.
- 1.3.11. **Mr. Long** thanked Mrs. Alfaro for her presentation. Mr. Luis Palmer suggested that before continuing with the agenda, the members of the EC should be asked about supporting this proposal. Mr. Long said that Mr. Hernan Velasquez should be welcomed and requested that the minutes of the last EC meeting held last December in Miami, Florida, be approved.
- 1.3.12. **Mr. Hernan Velasquez** thanked the welcome remarks and said that the participants in the meeting represented the decisions made by the countries.

- 1.3.13. **Mr. Long** thanked Mr. Velasquez and suggested that they signed the minutes. He also recommended that the EC prepared a response to the Central American proposal.
- 1.3.14. **Mrs. Andrea Dansa** said that the project seemed interesting, but she worried about its sustainability.
- 1.3.15. **Mrs. Senior** recommended that OIMA leverage the project and considered that it should be the star project in the Strategic Plan of OIMA. In her capacity as representative from the Andean Region, she also said that she would approve the initiative.
- 1.3.16. **Mr. Garcia** added that presently what they had was an idea that must be consolidated first as a pre-investment project and second, as an investment project. This entailed a long process. It meant that the individuals involved did not have a clear idea of their objectives. A procedure must be established to support projects adequately. His proposal was that in principle the Executive Committee supported the idea and the project. Then, to request that, in due time, the Central Region send to the Presidency of OIMA a project proposal including the purpose of this workshop, and a draft project specifying the activities in which they wanted OIMA to participate, clearly indicating that the final goal of the regional meeting would be to define the project. Then the Central American Region should commit to the project so that the Executive Committee of OIMA assumes responsibility for leveraging, selling and promoting the project.
- 1.3.17. **Mr. Long** supported the concept that much remains to be done as well as the idea of building local capabilities. He also believed that the Executive Committee should support the initiative.
- 1.3.18. **Mr. Moscoso** said everything was on the right track and that a workshop may not necessarily be the best mechanism. Nevertheless, this activity may set out the objectives. He believed that there was enough capacity to build a project commensurate to the needs and to push it through in the agreed time period thanks to the support that would be received from Colombia and from IICA. This way, the project everybody is thinking of could become a reality.
- 1.3.19. **Mr. Velasquez** underscored the relevance of the regional proposal. He also said that efforts should be aimed at the regional level, not only at the country level.
- 1.3.20. **Mrs. Senior** suggested that OIMA support activities so that regional members can assemble to work. Her proposal was that OIMA support the project as it is currently structured. Then, Mr. Fernando Palmer and Mr. Frank Lam, for example, could conduct virtual work to start shaping the project. She believed this was the only option, and that was not

enough for OIMA to just express interest. In addition, she noted that the proposal would be presented in another meeting of the EC in order to decide about the structure of the plan and the project. The decision should not be postponed, even more so when everybody was aware that the Executive Committee did not meet frequently. Her proposal to the President was that they looked for an option that would allow these countries to structure the project, and that they immediately set forth the path to be followed.

- 1.3.21. **Mr. Garcia** proposed the following: First, to organize a three-day work session and bring together country specialists to draft the final project. The second option would be to hire a consultant to travel to all member countries. He proposed changing the procedure somewhat: The workshop costs ten thousand dollars. However, ¿could the attending countries pay their own expenses? This way, OIMA member countries would share in this responsibility. OIMA as an organization would pay for the workshop, the moderators, the project, the implementation, but the participants would at least be responsible for paying their plane tickets and their per diems. The only reason for doing this is that it is necessary that countries assume part of the responsibility for the activities carried out by OIMA. This was not much to ask. OIMA could say "we will contribute ten thousand dollars to the delivery of the workshop provided that the participants pay for their per diems". This is not bureaucracy. It is simply an effort to set a precedent. As Mr. Velasquez clearly stated: "tomorrow we will be gone, and who is going to manage this organization if there are no precedents or principles?"
- 1.3.22. **Mr. Long** said that the EC strongly supported the Central American Region. He added that they should ask Mr. Moscoso about the idea that member countries contribute to the initiative.
- 1.3.23. **Mr. Moscoso** indicated that he needed to consult the member countries before giving any answer. Panama would do it. In fact, for the workshop Panama was bringing two additional delegates. This type of action reflects the commitment from individual country authorities to either believe or not in the work performed by institutions like OIMA. Also, many times, the authorities in the different countries are not clear about the purpose of participating in these organizations. Consequently, objectives must be set out beforehand so that it is clear to everyone that this is an investment made by a country in a process aimed at achieving common purposes. Personally, Mr. Moscoso agreed that member countries should commit to making some type of contribution. This would be further defined as they moved along.
- 1.3.24. **Mr. Long** thanked Mr. Moscoso for his input and said that this was an excellent opportunity for asking member countries to contribute. He then asked the members of the EC for their opinion.

- 1.3.25. **Mrs. Senior** noted that OIMA had the necessary technical capability to draft a proposal. She did not agree with the possibility of hiring consultants.
- 1.3.26. **Mr. Martinez** suggested that they wait for Mr. Marco Moscoso to make the necessary consultations. Furthermore, he pointed out that procedures should be developed.
- 1.3.27. **Mr. Long** concluded by saying the next step was to wait for Mr. Moscoso to deliver a response, at which point, a procedure was to be decided.
- 1.3.28. **Mr. Velasquez** indicated that there must be a specific statement accepting the idea of the project. Afterwards, the representative from the region and the other member countries would establish a *modus operandi*.
- 1.3.29. **Mrs. Dansa** said that the proposal of the project is not fully clear to her since right at the beginning certain figures were presented and now an initiative was being discussed for drafting the proposal. She went on saying that she expected to use in South America what was happening in Central America. She noted that it was better to hold a meeting for Central America during the workshop and address the possibility of organizing a workshop. Furthermore, she suggested that Mr. Moscoso look into the feasibility of conducting that workshop because consensus must be sought among many countries. Evidently, Costa and Panama fully support the project and would be willing to contribute money, organize the trips, pay for per diems, etcetera. However, nothing is known about what the other countries think.
- 1.3.30. **Mr. Long** clarified that the figures presented should only be taken as that. No commitments have been made to those figures. After reassuring the commitment of the EC to the initiative, he suggested that they take a recess.

Agreement CE-VIII-2007-01: To support the initiative presented by the Central American and Caribbean Region and request Mr. Marco Moscoso to consult with the other Region Representatives about their interest and commitment to participate in the work meeting.

1.4. Update of action items from the last meeting

- 1.4.1. **Mr. Frank Lam** indicated that during the last meeting of the EC sixteen Agreements were reached.

Agreement No. 1 was to hold this VIII Meeting of the Executive Committee in the City of San Jose, Costa Rica.

Agreement No. 2 was to present the financial information taking in to account the investments made by OIMA to develop a new format and an

accounts catalog. Additionally, Mr. Luis Palmer and Mrs. Adriana Senior pledged to send the expenses incurred for the Canada and Colombia meetings. January eleventh was chosen as the due date. Unfortunately the information had not been delivered and there was no way of incorporating these expenses. Nevertheless, the changes made to the format have been made, as requested by the Committee. The information from the United States and Colombia is still pending.

Agreement No. 3 was to send a letter to the highest authorities in those countries which did not attend the meeting of OIMA in Cartagena attaching the corresponding invoices. This Agreement was left in the hands of the President of OIMA.

Agreement No. 4 was to send a letter to member countries to find out about the interest they might have in becoming host countries for 2008, and indicate the intention of Panama of hosting the Regular Meeting of OIMA in 2008. These two Agreements remained the responsibility of the President.

Agreement No. 5 was to formally request to the Organizing Committee for the Caribbean Week a space so that the President of OIMA presents the Organization before this community. Mr. Terry Long was entrusted with this task as well. However, because of the direct contact between organizers of the event and the Technical Secretariat, the formal request was sent and it was accepted. Now they were only waiting for details as to the time during which OIMA will make the presentation. This information should arrive sometime in the month of July. A space had been requested during the plenary that will be held on October of 2007 in Jamaica. Furthermore, a space was requested to have a stand to promote OIMA.

Agreement No. 6 was to develop a profile for the SIMAs in the Caribbean. Implementation of this Agreement was undertaken by the Technical Secretariat, it was ready, and it would be presented to the EC in due time.

Agreement No. 7 was to implement the Administrators Workshop at IICA Headquarters during the week of March 26-31. This event was commissioned to Mr. Terry, Mr. Luis Palmer, Mr. Pedro Martinez, and Mr. Frank Lam. Proof of the work done was the Administrators Workshop to be held that week.

Agreement No. 8 was to send to the EC three design proposals for the promotional material. Only the logo of OIMA will appear since the EC had requested that the logo of IICA be eliminated from the promotional material. A sample of the promotional material is in the folder that was distributed among the participants. This material has been ordered and it will be used in the different events in which OIMA participates.

Agreement No. 9 was to upload in the Web site of OIMA pages with relevant information on fruits and vegetables pertaining to the Pan American Dictionary. This Agreement was already implemented.

Agreement No. 10 was to share the final report with all of OIMA members by means of a CD. This was the responsibility of the Technical Secretariat. However, this Agreement was not quite clear.

Agreement No. 11 was to hold the Regular Meeting of OIMA at the Swiss Hotel, in Quito, Ecuador. The Technical Secretariat and the Ministry of Agriculture of Ecuador were entrusted with planning this event. In this case, not all planning has been made since no confirmation had been received from the Ministry of Agriculture. Since Mr. Velasquez was attending the meeting, this issue would be clarified so that the planning can move forward.

Agreement No. 12 was to approve the document on strategic planning, its translation into Spanish and its inclusion in the Web site. This agreement was entrusted to the Technical Secretariat as well and it was already implemented. The material appears both in Spanish and in English.

Agreement No. 13 refers to the development of an annual action plan. At the Miami Meeting an annual action plan was developed. Nevertheless, the plan was not clear enough so this issue is still pending.

Agreement No. 14 was to invite an IICA Officer to present the planning process followed by IICA and how OIMA could be incorporated. This task was commissioned to Mr. Miguel Garcia. Basically, it was entrusted to the Technical Secretariat. The Agreement was already implemented. Somebody will inform of this during the workshop. The same goes for **Agreement No. 15**, which reads "to invite IICA to present the new relationship with FAO and how OIMA can benefit". Basically, Agreements No. 14 through 16 will be covered by Dr. Jim French during his presentation on Friday at 2:00 pm.

Finally, **Agreement No. 16** was to create a subcommittee to examine the legal status to OIMA. This subcommittee was made up of Mrs. Adriana Senior, Mr. Frank Lam and Mr. Luis Palmer. Mrs. Senior will inform of the progress made so far in this regard.

1.4.2. **Mr. Long** opened the floor for questions or comments.

1.4.3. **Mr. Moscoso** noted that two areas are still unclear. One refers to the CD and is related to the completion of the summaries, and is not an immediate action. The other one refers to the plan of action which included some adjustments to be made most of all to the promotional material.

- 1.4.4. **Mr. Long** suggested that emphasis be made on the final report by Dr. Mendoza. Furthermore, he recommended that Mr. Fernando Palmer or Mr. Frank Lam contact Dr. Mendoza to clarify the situation regarding product delivery and payment. Mr. Lam indicated that Dr. Mendoza had sent four reports, including the one from Panama which was shared with Mr. Moscoso. Mr. Lam suggested asking how much OIMA was willing to pay him for completing this work. **Mr. Long** asked how much this would cost, and Mr. Lam responded that the most reasonable thing to do was to ask for a proposal and then negotiate. Therefore, he suggested to the EC that he and Dr. Palmer request this proposal.
- 1.4.5. **Mr. Moscoso** suggested that they review this issue at the right moment as established in the agenda for the meeting.
- 1.4.6. **Mr. Long** supported this motion.
- 1.4.7. **Mrs. Senior** indicated that she had sent the expense information to IICA. She added that the expenses incurred in Colombia for the Cartagena Meeting held in 2006 totaled 24 million Colombian pesos, equivalent to \$11,000.00 USD.

1.5. Discussion on the legal framework OIMA

- 1.5.1. **Mrs. Senior** noted that in order for OIMA to obtain a legal status, considering its nature, it must do so as a multilateral organization of public domain. Multilateral organizations are organized within the context of International Law based on their objectives and purpose. For State Parties to the Organization of American States (OAS), international juridical persons can be organized as follows: They can be organized in accordance with an international agreement between States Parties within the framework of those international organizations that they belong to, or a resolution by an international organization. These juridical persons are governed by the provisions of the agreement or resolution that established such person and shall be recognized by operation of law as a subject of private law in all the States Parties in the same way as private juridical persons, without prejudice to the right of such person to invoke immunity from jurisdiction where appropriate. This is the legal framework through which a multilateral organization can be created. ¿Why is OIMA considered a multilateral organization? Because its members belong to the State or to entities related to the State and, as such, if OIMA wishes to become a juridical person, it has to do so through a multilateral organization. To do this, the rules of the OAS must be applied. Because of its nature, we need to abide by public law. Since the members of OIMA are also States Parties to the Organization of American States, the recommendation is that the rules of the Inter-American Convention on Personality and Capacity of Juridical Persons in Private International Law, subscribed in La Paz, Bolivia, on May 24, 1984, be applied. The conclusions of this are as follows: In order for OIMA to enjoy the status of a juridical person it would be advisable to

request the OAS to issue a resolution whereby OIMA is organized as a juridical person. Each member country has to approve this request to submit it to the OAS. But previously, the initiative should be presented to the OAS by IICA, then each country would act through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The procedure goes beyond the decision of any member country. Having to go to multilateral organizations is a large undertaking. It seems very easy but it is a complicated process. So, OIMA can be organized as a juridical person through a resolution by the OAS. Thus, to reach this level, if IICA presents this request, ¿What would be the easiest way to go to become a network within the OAS? Within the OAS no virtual networks have been created as multilateral organizations. Multilateral organizations operate and are registered just like IICA. IICA is a multilateral organization registered at the OAS and, obviously, it takes advantage of the entire OAS system. What we have is a virtual network. Let us not begin with the legal paperwork on a country by country basis, because this would imply having to go through a lot of official, bureaucratic red-tape. It would be better to know what would be the response of the Organization of American States to this IICA initiative in order to determine if it is worth beginning the necessary paper work. One of the natural functions of IICA is to create information and communication networks. This could also be an alternative: To see how the network could be registered within IICA. The purpose of this is that later on OIMA can present co-financed projects from other organizations. And, if you remember, this was the original intent. Thus, the proposal was to seek the support of IICA in order to submit the request to the OAS.

- 1.5.2. **Mr. Martinez** asked who had to endorse this proposal ¿Was it OIMA?
- 1.5.3. **Mrs. Senior** responded that this issue fell under the jurisdiction of countries. When a proposal is presented to the OAS, individual countries have to do the paperwork and the request has to be made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This issue was not to be decided by OIMA since it transcends borders. She went on by saying that the intention is that IICA submits the request because presently there were no networks organized within the OAS as a juridical person. Thus, it is necessary to determine what would be the most convenient legal framework to incorporate OIMA by means of a resolution. This is the easiest way to do it. It would avoid having to start a process in each individual country. At least in Colombia, this is a very difficult and long political process. Everything needs to be consulted. Relevant laws must be reviewed. Thus, this is the most practical alternative in order to determine how OIMA can be organized as a juridical person and be able to present initiatives and leverage projects.
- 1.5.4. **Mr. Long** asked what would be the benefits and disadvantages of all this. He opened the floor for discussion.

- 1.5.5. **Mrs. Senior** responded that Mrs. Susan Sadocha had indicated that there were resources available to leverage projects that promote the development of information systems. It is her opinion that OIMA should be in charge of submitting these funding requests. This would enable the organization to support projects such as the one in Central America and many others. Funds would not be requested as individual countries but as an organization. ¿What is the benefit of all this? This would strengthen OIMA and render it less dependent on resources from the USDA. No funds go to an organization that lacks a legal status. OIMA is a virtual network. Funds from multilateral organizations or from any other sources cannot be allocated to a virtual network. A network cannot receive donations or contributions of any kind if it does not have a legal status. Funds cannot be delivered to IICA so they can later be transferred to OIMA. OIMA may continue working as it has until now, but no one will ever know that the projects belong to OIMA. OIMA cannot sit together with the FAO, the IDB or the World Bank to obtain resources because OIMA does not exist. Legally speaking, it is a virtual entity. If IICA presents a project, funds may be allocated to IICA. Mr. Lam, Mr. Palmer, Mrs. Senior, and others dedicated to the task of determining how OIMA could be organized as a juridical person, and the easiest way to do this is through a resolution issued by the Organization of American States. Thus, currently there is an option to be organized through IICA. The other option would be that the activities of OIMA continue to be channeled through IICA in the context of its information and communication activities. This issue was put forth for discussion.
- 1.5.6. **Mr. Garcia** asked if the proposal was to attempt to position OIMA at the same level as the Pan-American Health Organization, the Human Rights Commission, the IDB, or IICA. ¿What other organizations were being supported by the OAS within the Pan-American system?
- 1.5.7. **Mrs. Senior** responded that that was not the intention. To make such a proposal would be far too ambitious. The World Health Organization has offices, infrastructure, it has everything. OIMA is a virtual network and, as such, it might be able to push for a resolution that would enable it to act as a virtual network. What can be done within the legal framework of the OAS is to have a resolution issued as they usually do in order for many things to work. These resolutions are governed by their legal framework and enable them to act and come into existence.
- 1.5.8. **Mr. Garcia** pointed out that Mrs. Senior proposed setting up a multilateral organization. Obviously, he does not have any legal knowledge, so he will forward this matter to IICA advisors. He added that frankly, this would give the impression that IICA wants to take ownership OIMA projects. In all truth, the role of IICA was to strengthen OIMA but only during a certain period of time, and as long as he was there his objective would be to help OIMA detach from IICA so that it can become a solid, strong organization in the future. IICA cannot spend all its time to a single institution. He wished to make it very clear that IICA was not interested in

working permanently with OIMA at its expense. IICA and OIMA can always coordinate activities in the present and in the future. The mission of IICA was to strengthen organizations, to help them consolidate. Mr. Garcia considered that a great deal had been achieved in two years in terms of consolidation. In fact, there have been conversations about what the relationship would be like in the future. One thing is to be the Technical Secretariat. For the time being, OIMA should be allowed to consolidate, and later it can go its own way. If the Executive Committee decides this is the best way to go, this would be an issue that goes beyond institutional boundaries, beyond the area of responsibility of Mr. Garcia. IICA would need to receive a request indicating what they have so far. Later, this needs to be forwarded to the lawyers and consulted with the Ministers of Agriculture. This is going to be a lengthy process. The other question is if there is another option to be organized and have access to projects. If this is a decision of the Executive Committee, IICA should take a look at it. Mr. Garcia considered that this issue was beyond the responsibility of the Technical Secretariat. It is an issue that must be discussed with authorities and with the legal advisors at IICA. It was necessary for OIMA to present a clear proposal as to what the organization wants. Should it be decided to go that way, all thirty four member countries need to be included. A quota system and a financing process would need to be established, and this can become a bit complex. As it is right now if IICA is not getting paid, OIMA may not be paid either. It should be said that OIMA and IICA get paid by the same people. Many countries have fallen behind in their payments. It is not clear whether governments are willing and have the capability to create a new institution. This needs to be done through the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

- 1.5.9. **Mr. Frank Lam** wondered if it was worth examining a model that is very common in Central America which is non governmental organizations (NGO). He considered this could be achieved easier, and the organization could be headquartered in one country in particular. He did not know which would be the best country, but this would be a much simpler legal solution to obtain the legal framework that OIMA is seeking. It would not be at a multinational level, but rather at the national level with a regional or hemispheric focus. You can find out for yourselves in Colombia, it would not take much time. Obviously, benefits and responsibilities would be more limited in scope.
- 1.5.10. **Mrs. Senior** responded that this had nothing to do with whether IICA had or did not have any projects or not. She wished to explain where this idea came up since Mr. Lam did not attend that meeting. The idea was born because there was an offer of funds from Susan. In order for these funds to reach OIMA the organization would need to have a legal status. Mrs. Senior emphasized that the goal of all the members was to strengthen OIMA. The idea presented by Mr. Lam had been explored, but the problem was that an NGO must have regional headquarters. We thought it would have been better if headquarters were located in the United

States, somewhere around Miami, so it could coordinate with the Secretariat. However, since this is an organization comprising several countries, all of them must agree. Maybe this matter needed not go to the Executive Committee, but rather to the equivalent of an Assembly in order to reach a decision. For example, should it be decided that countries would take turns hosting the headquarters, this would be too complicated because we would need to create another NGO in the other country. It would not be necessary to approach Ministers of Agriculture because the request is submitted to the OAS to issue a resolution. Mrs. Senior offered Mr. Lam to send him information on how to make this request. The legal department in Colombia studied the request and there is no need to deal with Ministries, or anything like that, it is just a consultation. What Mrs. Senior did was to explore how OIMA was going to leverage resources. Mrs. Senior concluded by saying that she did not know what the decision would be. She complied with the assignment entrusted to her. **Mr. Long** thanked Mrs. Senior for her presentation and suggested that it be discussed during the next EC meeting since it is a complex and sensitive issue. Furthermore, he invited Mr. Hernan Velasquez to present the proposal to hold the next meeting of OIMA in Ecuador.

Agreement CE-VIII-2007-02: To introduce the matter of the legal status of OIMA during the next EC meeting to be held in Panama City, in June.

1.6. Update on 2007 Regular Meeting

- 1.6.1. **Mr. Hernan Velasquez** thanked the welcoming remarks and reaffirmed the decision of Ecuador to host the Regular Meeting. Ecuador is undergoing a harsh government transition at the moment. Most of all, the country is adjusting a series of official policies that have a direct impact on the agricultural sector. The government is giving great support, so much so that the agency previously under the Ministry Foreign Trade has switched ministries. It is now under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The focus right now is to seek new agents to facilitate trade, open up the world for Ecuador so this country can meet all its obligations. Some difficulties arose from the many budgetary adjustments that were implemented by the new government. A government transition brings about such a situation. Unfortunately, up until last week the budget had not yet been approved. This is the responsibility of Congress. Recently, there has been serious trouble between the new government and Congress. This impacted budget approval and publication. Nevertheless, the budget has been approved with the funds to cover expenses for the Regular Meeting in September. Some lobbying was made with the new authorities. The former Under Secretary, who had proposed Ecuador as the host country, facilitated the situation with the new authorities now in charge of the Ministry. Thus, on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and the new government Mr. Velasquez ratified the offer to host the Regular Meeting. He went on to say that this was an opportunity to showcase Ecuador and thanked

OIMA for this. This is along the lines of what the Ministry of Agriculture is trying to do. Ecuador will greatly benefit from the presence of the EC members. Mr. Velasquez also explained that the Ministry of Agriculture only had a price information project. This project is changing its name to SIMA, the Information System on Agricultural Markets in Ecuador, is a project that will be presented in September. It will last eighteen months, and some financing is already available. The idea is to review this situation and to discuss the challenges concerning the existing technology gap that we hope to solve with your cooperation. The government is highly committed to holding this meeting, and this is why the Ministry of Agriculture has pledged all its support and dedication so as to be able to comply with everything that was offered. Mr. Velasquez wished to deliver the official communiqué signed by the relevant authorities stating the commitment to carrying out the task that had been entrusted to them. **Mr. Long** thanked Mr. Velasquez and went on to say that this would be an excellent opportunity for all his colleagues. He asked if they had set any dates. **Mr. Velasquez** indicated that the entire month of September was available. **Mr. Long** opened the floor for comments.

- 1.6.2. **Mr. Lam mentioned that usually** the meeting takes two and a half days. That is Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. And Tuesday is always used to hold the meeting of the Executive Committee. On Monday everybody is traveling. The trip starts on a weekday. They would arrive in Quito on Monday afternoon or night. On Tuesday the Meeting of the Executive Committee would be held. The Regular Meeting would begin on Wednesday with the participation of all the representatives. The meeting would go on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday halfway through the day, in order to have half a day free for all those who wish to leave Ecuador Friday evening or Saturday morning.
- 1.6.3. **Mr. Long** suggested holding the meeting in Ecuador sometime around the middle or the end of September.
- 1.6.4. **Mr. Velasquez** said that for security reasons it would be better to set dates from September 10-15. Mr. Long said the first or second week of September would be fine.
- 1.6.5. **Mr. Marco Moscoso** approved the proposed dates and suggested including technical issues, just as was done in Cartagena.
- 1.6.6. **Mrs. Dansa** proposed including a presentation from Argentina during the activities in Ecuador.
- 1.6.7. **Mr. Velasquez** suggested that with the collaboration of Mr. Lam, a proposal be made for the Ecuador meeting.
- 1.6.8. **Mr. Long** responded that there was sufficient time to set up the agenda, and that the most urgent issue at hand was the dates.

1.7. Budget update

- 1.7.1. **Mr. Lam** informed that, as per the recommendations set forth by the EC, he would present the new format of the financial report, including the balance sheet and income statement. He also indicated that the remaining balance to that day totaled US\$86,000.00.
- 1.7.2. **Mrs. Senior** suggested reporting the study by Mr. Mendoza as an expense. However, **Mr. Lam** stated that the study was reported as an investment following a recommendation by the EC.
- 1.7.3. **Mr. Terry Long** informed that the USDA had deposited US\$200,000.00 into IICA's account for funding OIMA. Likewise, he requested an estimated cost of the workshop. Mr. Lam responded that it was US\$40,000.00 plus some small miscellaneous expenses. Mr. Palmer reiterated that the expenses of the Executive Committee would be paid by the USDA. Next, **Mr. Long** suggested keeping the cost of the study as an investment. Similarly, **Mr. Garcia** suggested attaching the financial report to the minutes.
- 1.7.4. **Mr. Long** went on to say that it would be worth preparing a list of achievements, and that document entitled "Status of Projects for MIOA" was already in his possession. He concluded by saying he was willing to share this document with the EC.

The session was adjourned until after lunch.

1.8. Administrators Workshop

- 1.8.1. **Mr. Long** resumed the session by addressing the matter of certificates and the logistics for the workshop. He proposed preparing a certificate of attendance for all participants, and a thank-you letter for the speakers. He also suggested determining what should be done about the work of Mr. Mendoza. EC members contributed a series of ideas and suggestions concerning the steps to follow.
- 1.8.2. **Mr. Long** suggested taking a recess.
- 1.8.3. **Mr. Long** resumed the session and suggested holding the next EC meeting in Panama City, towards the end of June and reminded everyone about the request made by Panama to host the Regular Meeting of OIMA in the year 2008. Next, the discussion continued as to whether to publish or not the results of the final report prepared by Mr. Mendoza.

[Agreement CE-VIII-2007-03: To request Dr. Mendoza to present a price proposal to draft the Executive Summaries of the nineteen countries and the General Executive Summary.](#)

1.9. Regional reports

1.9.1. **Mr. Long** continued with the agenda. The next item was the presentation of regional reports.

1.9.2. **Mrs. Adriana Senior** informed that a questionnaire was sent to all countries of the Andean Region, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru to assess the support requirements from OIMA and the CCI. The latter is the entity responsible for developing the information system in Colombia. Mrs. Senior pointed out that when Colombia was elected people saw the strength of its SIMA. Obviously, one of the main areas of interest of neighboring countries is to obtain support from Colombia. Written responses were received from Ecuador and Peru. Bolivia responded through a telephone conversation. Eight questions were made. First they were asked in which area they were particularly interested in receiving more support to strengthen their SIMA. For Ecuador and Peru more support is needed in the area of information collection, and analysis and generation of results. Peru needed more support in processing and analyzing the information they already had, as well as in the generation of results. Bolivia needed support not only in information collection, processing and analysis, but also in dissemination and the methodology that is used to collect the information. In Bolivia, support is needed in all areas, since it considers itself weak when it comes to its SIMA. The exercise carried out by Bolivia was the support of a very small USAID project related to software. However, Bolivia does not have a SIMA like the other countries do. Thus, it had very limited participation and needed a lot of support. Second, they were asked what was the purpose of strengthening the area identified as critical. Which was the limiting factor that kept them from obtaining results in the areas of information collection, processing, and dissemination? Ecuador said it was the lack of instruments, methodology and guidelines. Lack of personnel, lack of equipment, orientation, and technical support. There was also a lack of financial resources. The system has always relied on the support of international organizations but it has not yet become financially independent. It does not have an institutional gross budget. This is why the system has not been consolidated as desired. Peru noted it required an update on methodology and on guidelines at the national level. The government does not have adequate personnel. There is also a lack of equipment and it needed all types of technical support to strengthen its SIMA. The type of support, each of these countries would be interested in receiving is technical assistance, and this relates to training. For example, in the area of market intelligence, as in the case of Costa Rica. This has been requested quite frequently. We proposed offering short internships in the country that offers the support. Colombia would be interested in receiving interns to work in its system and this may be done

in other countries as well. Colombia is willing to receive interns from Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia to work with their information collection personnel. Ecuador and Peru are also interested in receiving workshops and personnel training. Ecuador had its first experience this year and last year with very good results. They want to have more workshops. Peru is also interested in updating its methodology following the methodology applied in Colombia. In order to do this, Peru needs to train its personnel, at the national and regional levels. We asked them that based on what they know about the SIMA in Colombia, they prioritize areas and determine the type of support they needed. Their answer was the same as in the first question. These areas were information collection, processing, and analysis. There was consensus that everyone wants to develop market intelligence. Thus, this is a crosscutting issue where Colombia has been quite strong and can help the Andean Region. Colombia is working in a statistical system for the sector, which Peru is also requesting. There is interest in receiving support to strengthen the processes of information collection and dissemination. There was also interest in strengthening the SIMAS. These countries want to work in the areas of production costs and market intelligence. The member countries of the Andean Region need to exchange the information that is available. For example, for Colombia product development is very important, in particular, being able to reach farmers with all the information we generate. Colombia has noticed that not even with strong dissemination capabilities through radio and television, these efforts are sufficient to afford farmers full access to the required information. Bolivia is the weakest of the four Andean countries, and efforts should be focused on strengthening its information system. As the next step, and this is something we expect to finish after the workshop, Carlos will entrust neighboring countries with specific tasks. He will leave a schedule for future internships for those who may be interested. Colombia already had a proposal that was sent to Panama about a year ago. Colombia will present this to its neighboring countries so they can send their people to receive training in Colombia. Colombia has a program just like the USDA, which has helped us with special programs that involve the entire scheme. We also designed something along these lines for our neighboring countries, not only for the Andean region. Mrs. Senior added that they were interested in receiving people from other countries as well. This is the situation, we decided to conduct a survey because we believed it was the easiest methodology for determining positive actions in favor of the four countries we represent in this Executive Committee.

Mr. Terry Long thanked the speakers for their presentation.

- 1.9.3. **Mrs. Andrea Dansa** mentioned that she saw some areas of common interest with the Southern Region. They also carried out a survey by phone, by mail. Since the objective of this organization is that member countries develop more efficient systems, she underscored suggestions made by countries in the Southern Region. These countries are very interested in receiving regional workshops. These workshops have not been implemented so far. When the idea of implementing regional

workshops in the Southern Region was proposed, after the last meeting of the Executive Committee in December, it was the beginning of the holiday season. They considered this to be a good initiative, even more so if they are structured based on the needs of each country, and taking into account the work already performed by the consultant. So, this has not yet materialized, but the intention is there. It was also noted that most countries are willing to present projects aimed at strengthening their SIMAs in areas where deficiencies have been identified. A proposal was made to organize training workshops for harmonizing the procedures used to collect, analyze, and disseminate information. This will be addressed in the workshop that begins tomorrow. The Web site and the forum were discussed as well. More active participation in the Web site is required. Before, there were some difficulties in accessing the forum, but apparently these difficulties were solved. The issue of market intelligence is also of common interest to the Region. Progress is expected to be made in the areas of market intelligence and new information technologies. It is also necessary to promote cooperation agreements, so that countries may help each other based on their experience. The goal is to promote the exchange of information. They were consulted as to their participation in the workshop. Basically, all member countries from the Southern Region are expected to participate, with the exception of Uruguay. A brief report on Uruguay was provided based on the comments made by the Uruguayan Delegate. Note was taken of some of specific needs in each country, and these are items of common interest. For instance, Paraguay believes it would be very interesting to be able to communicate at the regional level as appropriate. According to the Delegate from Paraguay Delegate there are several projects with producer organizations which she hopes to present at the workshop, as well as the work that is being done directly by the SIMA in Paraguay, which apparently was not fully appreciated by the consultant. Brazil reported that it will send an expert to the workshop, who happens to be the Delegate himself. The Director, who had expressed interest in participating, will not be able to attend because of the many changes that are taking place at the Ministry of Agriculture and CONAP. In Brazil, an agricultural price information system is being set up, which did not exist before. The plan is to present the work that is being done, and to take advantage of the experiences in other countries. Chile was to make a presentation on media relations at the workshop. They hope to contribute with their experience regarding relations with users, in particular, the way they respond to inquiries and quality assurance. They do not have any projects. Nothing was mentioned about regional projects because markets are considered to deal more with trade policies than with prices. They thought it would be better for the working groups to be organized by thematic area, not by region. As regards Uruguay, there is no centralized market information system, and no institutional policies have been clearly defined in relation to an office that would direct or coordinate the collection, processing and dissemination of information. Therefore, the Delegate found it quite difficult to propose the hierarchy of participants in

the workshop. **Mr. Long** thanked Mrs. Dansa for the presentation and gave the floor to Mr. Moscoso.

- 1.9.4. **Mr. Marco Moscoso** started by saying that the Central American Region has permanent communication with the different countries. Some countries have certain limitations in their communication capabilities, even via the Internet, but the Region is focusing on promoting a project in the area of market intelligence, which was just presented to the EC. This project was also to be presented at the Administrators Workshop. The Central American Delegates consider this project to be one of their main priorities. In addition, there is a possibility for organizing a regional workshop to receive more input for a final regional project on market intelligence. This is where the Central American Region is focusing efforts right now. Some actions are being implemented in some countries in particular, such as El Salvador. This country has a project closely related to this area. In this regard, a resource portfolio was created about four years ago, and maybe OIMA could update it. This portfolio included a good deal of information on the needs of the different countries in several areas, not only training—their main area of interest. Mr. Moscoso reported that the Representation from Guatemala had changed. The two Delegates that participated in the Cartagena Meeting no longer work for the Ministry. OIMA is being informed of these changes. Until now only one representative has been appointed with no alternate representative. They will participate in the workshop, but the two Delegates who had been participating since the creation of OIMA are no longer with the Ministry. With Gustavo, who was the Chief Delegate, some information has been exchanged by mail; he said he will continue to be linked to OIMA, but from the private sector. That is all the information that was received. It is possible that Mr. Long or Mr. Lam know more about this matter, since they were the ones who received the information for the workshop. Another activity that is being promoted in the Region, as a result of the work performed by Dr. Mendoza, is the elaboration of project profiles aimed at correcting the deficiencies mentioned in his report. In the country reports, Dr. Mendoza mentioned several variables and elements that needed to be corrected in order to strengthen the SIMAs. As a result of that input, it was suggested to the countries that they take that information into account when developing the profiles to request funds. This issue has not been addressed yet. Therefore, all countries are urged to elaborate on this and reflect it as a need in a brief profile. In general, there is a demand to train the human resource, particularly in the area of information analysis and market intelligence. The goal is not only to improve data collection but also the analysis of that input in order to provide useful information to users. A good deal of information is being collected, but little is being disseminated or processed with substantive analysis. Consequently, it does not contribute to the decision-making process. This is a common feature of the systems in Central America. New users are increasingly requesting more friendly information, to assist them in their decision-making process. Sometimes, the information provided has more statistics, more numbers and less analysis of

consumer market trends, product market trends, and expectations related to niche markets, so that a country may pursue a market information strategy to penetrate those markets. So, the major deficiency in the Region relates to the generation of these variables in order to assist in the decision-making process, particularly in the private sector, which is the sector that drives the development of agricultural exports in the Region. In the regional workshop, each country will contribute some input to strengthen activities at the regional level.

- 1.9.5. **Mr. Long** thanked Mr. Moscoso for his presentation and added that on behalf of the North American Region, when they met to discuss as regions the selection of candidates, the next representative at Cartagena, one of the things that they decided as a region was that they wanted to get together no less than once a year in addition to the Regular Meeting. In other words, if the Regular Meeting is typically held in September or sometime in the late winter or spring, the Region wanted to meet again to ensure that the countries were working together as a region; that joint strategies were being developed as a region. So, what the Region met in Washington D.C. on March 1st, Pedro Martinez, Blanca Guarneros, Mark Ziggler from Canada, Dr. Palmer and I, and Aaron Morris, a colleague from Livestock and Grain Market News. The first thing on the agenda was basically just to update one another. Current projects or short term goals. Canada has had a great decline in the quality of its system over the last decade, or perhaps two decades. And it was a problem recognized not just by users such as AMS, but also by their industry. The products were not delivered on time, the information was not comprehensive or was not accurate, and of course the information that is neither timely nor useful would not be used. So, they entered into a project last year in February, where the industry and the government came together and devised a way to fix the system if you will in Canada. Mr. Long attended the first meeting and offered any help that AMS could provide. You know, please, let us know what it is you think we can do, we are loaning you our training materials, we are loaning you our trainers, whatever you think we can do to support you. AMS has a handout that will be presented at the Administrators Workshop as a discussion item. This handout talks about their project with the industry and how was it going forward. Mexico informed of some of the interesting things they are doing in order to link buyers and sellers. Not allowing the transactions to go forward on their network, but merely linking the two. You have a product to sell, I have a product I need to buy. They also want to look into some role in tracking or reporting on disaster situations. For example, there has been a flooding due to a hurricane, what impact did have on transportation to that region of the country. Because, obviously, if it impacts transportation, it impacts food supply. That is a role AMS plays in our country in terms of reporting up the chain to decision makers. Of course, our colleagues in Mexico have been working with some of our colleagues within the hemisphere to provide assistance or participate in workshops as they did in Ecuador in November. Currently we are working on enhancing that market news portal. Again,

for us this is a great leap forward. Historically speaking, we generated more market reports, literally hundreds of them everyday we still do, hundreds of them. However in creating a market report, we often had to make assumptions about what the customer needed, or what markets they are tracking, if they are asparagus or tomato. Well, with the portal we created an ability for them to generate their own reports. For the first time, the public has access to our database, which of course is extremely detailed, price and supply data. So not only can they now go in and do their own reports, they can query our database, they can save those queries and reuse them again. They can customize so when they log in to the market news portal, it goes as the registered user showing the market that they are interested in. Lastly it enables them to download the data in a variety of formats, not just look at this information but also be able to download it into spreadsheets, or as a XML so they can download it into their own databases. Another issue that was addressed was the expansion into the area of tracking the organic sector. Speaking of niche markets, this is a great opportunity. Production in the U.S. lags behind consumption. So, for our partners in the Americas, organics is a great opportunity. We work with our colleagues in Colombia to provide them the information that a person in another company and institution needs to be certified by USDA as a certifying agent, then your product could be sold in the U.S. markets as organic. An important role for an institution like CCI. And what came out of that other than us sharing information? Well, Pedro in particular has some ideas on how we might work together, the region of North America. For example, how about the work that they do in ISO, ISO 9000, I assume everyone here is familiar with that particular quality assurance program. I am not sure how many countries in the Americas have their market information system operating and certified as ISO. Our colleagues in Mexico do. So, Pedro has offered to work with us to move in that direction within AMS and Canada. Also he had suggested that if you look at the information system and AMS, it allows you to, in the portal, to convert the dollars into any currency you would like. You can convert it from our weight system to the metric system. However you are going to get it in English. There is only one language offered. Considering the tremendous growth in the Spanish-speaking population in the United States, in fact in North America, or in U.S. and Canada. That seems to be a flaw in fact, I told our colleagues that I find it a bit embarrassing that with this far along and we still do not have Spanish as an option on our site. So we have suggested that Canada take the lead on developing the terms of reference, or at least the preliminary steps and the cost for us having all three languages on our website. Canada already has English and French. They are required to by law. They do not have Spanish. Well, if you could create a system that allows those two languages, could it not be three? In the United States obviously we are more interested in Spanish than French, truth to be told. And lastly, to work towards harmonization of terminology and product identifications, or products descriptions really. Our market clearly drives North America, in fact many of the Americas, and there are very mature markets. You can't ship a container product that is all size and

shapes and expect to sell it, in fact we have import restrictions that deal with quality for many products. So, our idea was to work towards harmonization of terminology and make these product descriptions really available for people who would target our market. Obviously these products would have benefit for people beyond just Mexico. We did agree that we would host or have our next meeting of the tri-national of the North America region of OIMA concurrent with our National Market News Association meeting which some of you here have been to before and of course Mexico and Canada would be invited to stay for that meeting, but certainly the day before we will have our next meeting, that is in August 23 to 26 in Oklahoma City, and we have invited them for us to hold the next meeting. Our agreement was that each country would take turns hosting the meeting; obviously, we hosted one in Washington and it just seemed like the Oklahoma meeting of the National Market News Association was too good an opportunity to miss up or to miss for us to get together again. Hopefully, next March we will meet in Mexico or Canada. And I know I left at least a thing or two. Pedro, would you like to add something?

- 1.9.6. **Mr. Martinez** replied that the comments made by Mr. Long had been quite thorough and precise. As a group, they are interested in establishing a work program with specific projects. The main motivation was having and sharing three specific projects, with a clear set of responsibilities. Each country was responsible for finding a way for the Region to work on the basis of a quality assurance system. This would immediately make us feel confident that the information is being generated following the same parameters throughout the Region. As mentioned by Terry, another goal was to commission Canada the development of bilingual information systems given the tremendous growth of the Hispanic population. In fact, Mexico has a Web page which is also in English, and the intention was to cooperate and share everything in order to facilitate this task. Canada said that, at least at first glance, it would be very expensive to develop a system in Spanish. Mexico indicated that they had the information in Spanish, and that they were only trying to develop a project to share strengths. Finally, harmonization is very important for the Region under a free trade agreement. Mexico, Canada and the United States need to harmonize their information systems, products, measurements, and nomenclatures. In this respect, the work carried out by the United States during all these years, particularly in the area of information management must be acknowledged. The idea is that the United States pushes this project. More specifically, each country would be responsible for a project, for pushing it. This would show the willingness and interest for mutual collaboration that we need in order to create and strengthen common information systems in the Region. This is what drives Mexico's ongoing efforts, and that is how we realized that an annual meeting would not be enough to complete this type of project. With the support of the USDA, Mexico can continue working jointly with the rest of the Region and bring about these three initial projects. This would spearhead other more

challenging projects. In the future, everyone will realize that this is related to specialized information analysis, which is an area recognized by the three countries as having great potential, but where they need to work together and share strategic information in order to open markets in their territories. Basically, a path has been set out. The three countries are committed to making progress and informing of the progress achieved in relation to each of the goals set forth for the entire Region.

- 1.9.7. **Mr. Long** thanked Mr. Martinez for his comments and went on to say that he had remembered something else. I was mentioning that SNIM has this system to link buyers and sellers, and offered to allow us to use that or expand that to include the other parts of North America. And initially you might say, well, you know what does Dole or Chiquita or Wal-Mart need to be linked to buyers and sellers, you know they have no need for this. Well, in reality, as I thought about that I discussed that with Sr. Clayton in fact. You know, perhaps there is an opportunity here. You know, small producers, small packers, small shippers, in the United States at least, are often are held captive is too strong a word or phrase, but they might be looking for an opportunity for direct relationship with customers in Mexico. Or a direct relationship with suppliers in Mexico. The big companies probably do not need our help. But not everyone is a big company. So, the more I thought about that I thought that if it gave us nothing more than exposure to small business entities additional opportunities that would have been energy, time well spent, and plus it gives us opportunities to take advantage of an existing platform. One of the things we do extremely well in AMS, we have done it for ninety one years, is collect market information. We do that better than anyone in the world. So, good for us. What we do very poorly and make very little effort at is the end user and supplying their needs. So, when I hear some of the comments about focusing on rural dissemination of information, focusing on particular sectors to assist them in identifying niche markets. You know, it is not an area of focus for us. But I think we like anyone else can benefit from this sharing of information. I have pushed my colleagues to think in terms of how do you add value to this information you have. Extremely comprehensive, extremely timely, highly reliable, courts accept our market reports, in fact you have to probe they are not an accurate reflection of the market. But how do we add value to them, to the small user. How do we make it more user-friendly? We will talk a little bit about customer feedback, but it is a bit scary I would say for my colleagues. You know, we have done this for ninety one years, what value could we possibly add? Oh my gosh I do not know. I have got a room full of smart people with ideas on how to add value to the market information. Let's see what we can take advantage of. So with that I would say that we have time for a little more discussion or closing comments. Miguel, any thoughts for the group? Sorry.
- 1.9.8. **Mr. Miguel Garcia** suggested that the Delegates deliver written reports to include them as attachments to the minutes, and to keep a record.

- 1.9.9. **Mr. Long** requested more time to do that, because even though he had agreed to draw the minutes of the March meeting, he had been busy preparing for this meeting, so he has not concluded them. Mr. Long accepted that as a project for the North American Region. Next, he gave the floor to the Andean Region.
- 1.9.10. **Mr. Lam** asked for a few minutes to share information on the work performed—as requested by the EC—to develop a profile of the Caribbean countries. In the last EC Meeting, the Technical Secretariat was requested to develop a profile of the fourteen countries. One of them, the Dominican Republic, is already a member of OIMA. This work was done with the collaboration of our Regional Specialist in the Caribbean, and with the support of the Regional Director, Dr. Arlington Chesney. Dr. Chesney is also providing assistance for the Caribbean Week. Mr. Lam went on to say that Trinidad and Tobago, and Jamaica have a well established market information system. Barbados, Dominica, Santa Lucia, and Surinam have market information systems as well. A list is already available with contact persons, institutions, telephone numbers, and e-mails in order to establish the first contacts through IICA offices, should OIMA decide to do so. In the Island of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, there is an ongoing project to develop a market information system, and there is great interest, at least from what was expressed in the e-mails, in taking more advantage of a possible relation with OIMA. Finally, countries such as Antigua, Bahamas, Grenada, Guyana, and Saint Kitts and Nevis lack a market information system at all. The other country in the Caribbean which also lacks a market information system is Haiti. Last year Haiti expressed interest in becoming a member of OIMA. However, due to the political situation in that country, Haiti was not able to attend the meeting in Cartagena. In the case of Belize, which is considered to be part of Central America, they have no information system either. However, IICA is promoting through its office the creation of such a system. We have been working very closely with the institution that could lead a market information system, should OIMA decide to support it. Mr. Lam concluded by offering to share a brief report with the Executive Committee, and asked if there were any questions.
- 1.9.11. **Mr. Velasquez** thanked on behalf of his country and made a cordial invitation to everyone for the September meeting.
- 1.9.12. **Mr. Martinez** indicated that given the relevance of that issue, it should be included in the agenda of the next EC Meeting. Unfortunately, there was not enough time to finish the discussion, but at least Mr. Lam provided a general idea of what could be further explored to link the Caribbean Region.

Agreement CE-VIII-2007-04: To include in the agenda of the next meeting of the Executive Committee, to be held in Panama City, in June, the incorporation of the Caribbean countries into OIMA.

1.10. Close of meeting

- 1.10.1. **Mr. Long** thanked Mr. Lam. He went on to say that it would be useful for to give this issue the time it deserves, but they do appreciate the work performed by IICA in putting this together. Again it has been, and is, one of our goals to work, to strengthen our relationship in the Caribbean. Any closing comments anyone else? I would like to thank you for your kind attention, you have been a good audience. I will see you seven forty in the lobby or actually in the busses again coming back here. Hopefully we can get settled in and start promptly. So, again everyone was there at the bus this morning except Pedro, but... but it is usual, so Miguel.
- 1.10.2. **Mr. Garcia** proposed to the President thanking the interpreters on behalf of EC. Many thanks to them.
- 1.10.3. **Mr. Terry Long** adjourned the session.