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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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**Follow-up to the Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for
Europe and Central Asia**

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1. This follow-up report was prepared in follow-up to the *Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Europe and Central Asia*,¹ at the regional, subregional and country levels. Specific focus was given to the country level presence in the region, as well as to issues related to the governing institutions and management at the regional, subregional and country level.
2. In line with FAO's policy on evaluations, this report provides an update on the status of implementation of the actions set out in the Management Response. Upon request by the Office of Evaluation (OED), the report introduces a Management Action Record Scoring (MAR Score) on a six-point scale, in which FAO Management self-assessed the level of adoption and implementation of recommendations.

Overall progress in the implementation of all accepted recommendations

3. The 38th session of the European Commission's on Agriculture (ECA) and the 29th session of the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) have addressed the governing institution issues by approving rules of procedures for the ERC. It was also agreed to move the ECA sessions into alternate years prior to the ERC. The first session will be the 39th ECA in Budapest in September 2015.
4. The 38th session of the ECA also agreed to abolish the Working Party for Women and the Family in Rural Development and to establish a Gender Network in the Region. In addition, gender mainstreaming capacity was strengthened by recruiting two gender experts in the region. Results have been also achieved in gender mainstreaming in projects and also the regular appraisal of projects regarding gender issues.
5. In line with the recommendation to strengthen country level capacity, training has been provided in programme management to Armenia and Georgia, as well as operational responsibility with the rolling out of GRMS.
6. Following the recommendation of the evaluation to appoint a non-resident FAO Representative in Moldova and Albania, the European Regional Conference in April 2014 decided to open two new positions: a) in Albania, an agreement was signed at the end of 2014, to be followed by the recruitment of an Assistant FAOR (AFAOR) in Tirana; b) in Moldova, FAO has also signed an agreement and an Assistant FAOR has already been recruited. The AFAOR in Uzbekistan was appointed in October 2014, and together with the AFAORs in Tajikistan and Moldova, all completed their training in the Regional Office for Europe (REU) Budapest.
7. On the recommendation to discontinue the National Correspondent Scheme, this has not yet been implemented, as it ensures FAO presence, particularly in those countries of the region, where FAO is operationally active and implements ongoing projects. For instance Ukraine just requested to have a national correspondent. In the absence of FAO personnel, the National Correspondent can ensure FAO's coverage, including liaison, coordination and outreach.
8. Regarding the discussion on Host Country Agreements, a number of countries had reservations regarding the applicability of UN privileges and immunities, (i.e. exemptions from taxation and military service). The Host Country Agreements with Albania, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan have been signed. The negotiations with Azerbaijan have been concluded and the Host Country Agreement should be signed shortly. Negotiations are still underway with Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, although FAO has a large portfolio of ongoing and planned activities in these countries.
9. Efforts have also been made to expand the responsibilities of country offices including offices with double accreditation schemes. Delegation of authority has been given for procurement and signature for letters of agreement including rolling out of GRMS.
10. The use of Russian language capacity has been further enhanced. Since 2014 all communication on the REU Website is published in both English and Russian. Russian language capacity is an important criterion in selection of staff for the region and both project documents and

¹ PC 113/3; PC 113/3 Sup.1

communications are increasingly translated into Russian. Editorial capacity in the respective offices has been further enhanced.

Guidance sought

11. The Programme Committee may wish to note progress in the implementation of the Evaluation recommendations and provide its views on the follow-up report.

Follow-up to the Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Europe and Central Asia

Matrix with Management Action Records (MAR) column

Accepted evaluation recommendations	Actions Agreed in the Management Response	Description of actions actually taken or reasons for actions not taken	MAR score ²	Impact of, or changes resulted from the taken actions
<p>Recommendation 1: To FAO and REU, on the Governance institutions for the Europe and Central Asia region</p> <p>REU as the Secretariat for both the ERC and ECA should, in collaboration with the Member Countries, finalize the Rules of Procedure for the FAO Regional Conference for Europe to be submitted at its 29th session in 2014, as per the above suggestions; Independently from the contents of the Rules of Procedures, the following should be implemented: a) summary reports from the regional technical commissions should become a permanent standing item on the ERC agenda; b) the ERC Secretariat should play a greater role in identifying the priorities for the Region and its sub-regions.</p>	<p>REU, as Secretariat to the ERC and ECA, will table these issues in close collaboration with the ERG and the ECA, particularly with reference to the rules of procedures for the ERC. Both the informal consultations in the first quarter 2013 and Executive Committee meetings of the ECA will take this up. The agenda preparation for the ERC 2014 will take into consideration that reports from the Regional Technical Commission become a standing item.</p>	<p>Rules of procedures for the ERC have been endorsed by the 29th ERC 2014. Regional technical commission reports have been subject of permanent standing information item at the 29th ERC and also future ERCs. Informal Consultation meetings and close interaction with the ERG and the ERC Chair, as well as with member countries through the CPFs increased the role of the ERC Secretariat in the identification of priorities.</p>	<p align="center">5</p>	<p>Increased efficiency of the governing meetings in the region and revitalization of the ECA including focused and targeted priority identification and thus PWB preparation.</p>

² **1 - None:** no action was taken to implement the recommendation; **2 - Poor:** plan and actions for implementation of the recommendation are at a very preliminary stage; **3 - Inadequate:** implementation of the recommendation is uneven and partial; **4 - Adequate:** implementation of the recommendation has progressed; there is no evidence yet of its results on the intended target; **5 - Good:** the recommendation has been fully implemented and there is some initial evidence of its impact on the intended target; **6 - Excellent:** there is proven evidence that the recommendation has had a positive impact on its intended target.

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<p>Recommendation 2: To REU, SEC and ESW, on advocacy for gender equality in the Governance institutions for the Europe and Central Asia Region</p> <p>REU, SEC and ESW, based on in-depth analysis of the evidence available and further dialogue with all concerned parties, should prepare a proposal to be submitted to the 2014 ERC on the most cost-effective way forward to ensure that gender and social inclusion perspectives are fully mainstreamed into FAO's work in the Region.</p> <p>Independently from the contents of the proposal, progress made in mainstreaming gender and social inclusion in the work of the Organization in the Region should become a permanent standing item in the ERC agenda.</p>	<p>A proposal will be submitted to the 2014 ERC on the most efficient and cost-effective way to replace the Working Party on Women (WPW) with another more effective mechanism to ensure gender perspectives are fully mainstreamed into FAO's work in the Region. Moreover, the Regional Gender Officer position will be advertised soon, with a view to filling the post by mid 2013.</p>	<p>The proposal for the successor of the Working Party on Women and the Family in Rural Development (WPW) has been presented to the 38th session of ECA and the 29th ERC focusing on the establishment of a gender network in the region. The ECA and the ERC session have agreed to abolish the WPW.</p> <p>The vacant Gender Officer post is being re-advertised due to the lack of a suitably qualified shortlist following interviews. In the meantime, the capacity on gender has been increased through the recruitment of a junior and senior gender experts in the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, who have been operational since the last quarter of 2014.</p>	4	<p>The WPW has been abolished. The gender and social protection network composed of country-based experts has been formed and gender and social protection research and mainstreaming is proceeding in collaboration with these experts. A first meeting of the expert group is planned for April 2015.</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: To FAO, on its presence at country level in Europe and Central Asia</p> <p>The Evaluation recommends the following:</p> <p>a) a non-resident FAO Representative be appointed with multiple-accreditation to</p>	<p>Review delegations to AFAORs with CSF and OHR so as to bring them to a sufficient level of authority to execute programmes in the county</p>	<p>Delegations of authority for procurement and LOAs for AFAORs in the relevant countries have been provided. The HCA for Albania has been already signed. An AFAOR</p>	4	<p>Results concerning the recommendation are visible regarding:</p> <p>a) increased management capacities of the AFAOR and thus increased efficiency of programme</p>

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<p>Armenia and Georgia; the Assistant FAO Representatives at country level should be delegated enough authority to manage the whole programme, represent FAO within the UN, make decisions or facilitate rapid decision-making;</p> <p>b) a non-resident FAO Representative be appointed with multiple-accreditation to Albania and the Republic of Moldova, following one of the modalities suggested above;</p> <p>c) in the Region, the National Correspondent Scheme should be discontinued and FAO should not engage in operational activities at country level without, as a minimum, an AFAORep within a multiple-accredited FAO Representation or a senior officer embedded in the UNRC Office.</p> <p>d) The foreseen Programme and Partnership Development posts at country level can be effective if staffed at an appropriate level of seniority (minimum P4);</p> <p>e) The newly created post in REU for Partnership Development officer should work in close coordination with LOB, to support the development of a stronger partnership between REU and the EU institutions for the Europe and Central Asia Region.</p>	<p>Establish a post and appoint a programme officer for Albania</p> <p>Seek viable alternative arrangements for in-country presence to replace the National Correspondents</p> <p>Follow-up with OSD and OCP</p> <p>Fill the position</p>	<p>position has been established for Albania in the process of issuing the VA; planning to open the office in 2015.</p> <p>The NC scheme has not yet been discontinued in the absence of suitable alternative arrangements. NCs are still in place in Albania (up to the opening of the FAOR in 2015), Serbia, FYROM, Bosnia and Herzegovina and a request has been received from Ukraine.</p> <p>Partnership position filled for Turkey.</p> <p>P-2 Position for Partnership has been filled in REU.</p>		<p>implementation at country level;</p> <p>b) non-resident FAO Representative is operational;</p> <p>c) it has not been abolished yet, since there are no other means to be visible. For instance Ukraine just requested to have a national correspondent. In the absence of alternatives, the national correspondent is the only way to have FAO presence;</p> <p>d) no results yet to be reported;</p> <p>e) strengthening strategic relations with NGO/CSO has been initiated, as well as capacity development work for NGO/CSO in the Region.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 4: To LEG, OSD, REU and SEC, on Host Country Agreements</p> <p>The Evaluation recommends that the status of FAO accreditation in all countries in Europe and Central Asia where the Organization carries out field operations, be reviewed to ensure that it can benefit from the relevant immunities and privileges. In so doing, FAO should take into account the experience of other UN agencies in each specific case and should not initiate activities in a country unless the standard basic agreement or equivalent has been signed with the Government.</p>	<p>Whenever existing arrangements are inadequate and following a selective approach, FAO could seek to negotiate SBAs. As an alternative it could be possible to conclude suitable project agreements providing for the necessary guarantees</p>	<p>Efforts have been made to pursue signing of HCAs in the countries of the Region. Progress has been made as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Host Country Agreements with Albania, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan were signed. b) Negotiations with Azerbaijan have been completed and the HCA should be signed shortly. c) Negotiations are still ongoing with Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. 	3	<p>Operational efficiencies and some national taxation benefits have been realized. Also, government contributions have been negotiated within the HCAs.</p>
<p>Recommendation 5: To CSH/OHR, REU, SEC and SSC, on Manual Section 375 and Non Staff Human Resources contractual conditions</p> <p>CSH, REU, SEC and SSC should undertake a comprehensive analysis of the adequacy of the system of NSHR contractual arrangements in general and as applied in the country offices of the region, analyzing conditions and procedures and improving the quality of information and communication. This approach should contribute to an overall review of the NPP modality, including its coverage by MS 375.</p>	<p>Review contractual arrangements to increase flexibility. Update of post description for all posts in the region. Establish learning modules to develop the capacity of staff in decentralized offices in administration, office and staff management</p>	<p>Review of the Manual Section has resulted in the cancelation of the mandatory break for PSA in case max number of days not reached. Also NPP can be employed by other projects.</p> <p>Skill mix review and adjustment of post description for the positions in the region has been done. Increased use of generic job descriptions.</p>	4	<p>Administrative and operational efficiencies have been realized through implementation of these changes.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 6: To CSH/OHR, LEG, OSD, REU and SEC, on delegation of authority</p> <p>FAO should revise, in the Europe and Central Asia Region, the delegation of authority to countries without a fully fledged FAO Representation. This should include:</p> <p>a) revise terms of reference, roles and responsibilities that allow national staff to operate GRMS to its full potential, under the adequate supervision of the multiple-accredited FAO Representative;</p> <p>b) enable staff at country level through capacity development packages that will allow them to operate GRMS safely;</p> <p>c) ensure that AOS reimbursements accrue to the closest organizational level to where the field programme is actually implemented;</p> <p>d) open imprest accounts, to permit offices to perform financial/operational functions. FAO staff, recruited at the appropriate level, whether national or international, should be granted full authority for managing these instruments. The present system, implying the use of cash, should be discontinued, except for proven emergencies.</p>	<p>Review financial delegations to National Officers (AFAORs) and develop policy.</p>	<p>Delegation to AFAORs has been given in multiple accreditation countries.</p> <p>AFAORs Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, have a re-delegated authority for procurement/LOA up to USD 10,000. AFAOR Georgia has been assigned full BH responsibility for selected national projects (thus generating AOS for the country office), as well as of PSA.Nat on behalf of non-resident FAOR. AOS are already generated by Azerbaijan. These modalities will gradually be replicated in other COs. GRMS has been deployed in most of the COs of the region with full involvement of local staff. Training was provided and operations are constantly supported by the OSU based in REU. Ad hoc workflows have been designed to ensure adequate segregation of duties. GRMS is planned to be deployed in Armenia during 2015. Deployment in Moldova</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>These measures are implemented in the region in a progressive way, to take into account the capacities of each office as well as the volume and complexity of the activities. The results are promising. An increased efficiency of the process is noted together with clear professional empowerment and motivation of the local staff, both at professional and general services level.</p>

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		and Uzbekistan (both new offices) will be assessed based on the future volume of activities. Imprest account has been recently opened in Armenia. In Uzbekistan an account will be opened during 2015.		
<p>Recommendation 7: To FAO and REU, on the use of the Russian language</p> <p>In order to enhance the quality of its technical work and the diffusion of its normative products FAO should:</p> <p>a) in recruitment, give priority to the best technical competence in countries, essentially in Central Asia, where Russian rather than English is the FAO working language, and invest in translation costs for reports and administration forms. Fluency in Russian should be considered an advantage in selecting international staff to work in these countries;</p> <p>b) invest in translation of publications and other normative products into Russian.</p>	<p>Ensure Russian language is given more prominence in the selection of staff in the region. Target sources and identify good candidates for position with the best technical competences and required skills.</p> <p>Supplement list of documents available in Russian language.</p>	<p>Russian language capacity has been further enhanced. Since 2014 all communication on the REU Web site is published in both English and Russian. Russian language capacity is an important criteria in the selection of staff for the region and both project documents and communications are increasingly translated into Russian. Editorial capacity in the respective offices has been further enhanced.</p> <p>Virtually all newly recruited staff in the region have at least minimum knowledge of Russian as a working language.</p> <p>Emphasis has been given to Russian language training.</p>	4	<p>More documents available in Russian language. Effective communication with member countries using Russian language has increased.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 8: To FAO, on enhancing the One-FAO approach</p> <p>FAO, REU and SEC should invest in developing stronger ties, communication and coordination among Technical Departments and staff in the DOs. Ways to achieve this should include:</p> <p>a) Annual meetings should be convened for FAO staff, similar to the Land and Water Days in the Land and Water Division, to maintain and strengthen technical links between the officers posted in the decentralized offices and in HQ.</p> <p>b) Shared supervisors between HQ and DO in the PEMS agreement of all technical officers in the DOs;</p> <p>c) Shared supervisors between HQ and DO in the PEMS agreements of technical officers in HQ working extensively in the Region;</p> <p>d) Establish a communication and information sharing platform in all Technical Departments on the model of AGP;</p> <p>e) Establish a minimum of one-month induction period in HQ for newly recruited technical officers in any DO in the Region.</p>	<p>Implement the policies for technical networks</p> <p>Encourage decentralized technical officers to include always one officer in the technical division at HQ as multirater in their PEMS process.</p>	<p>Technical divisions provided further details regarding the established technical networks. DDN meetings provide information regarding the established technical networks. The new modalities of work within the reviewed Strategic Framework has increased the linkage to technical divisions at HQ, as well as multidisciplinary work and a better horizontal and vertical integration of expertise in the implementation of the work.</p> <p>PEMS agreements in the region include multiraters from technical divisions at HQ and vice-versa.</p>	5	<p>Increased linkage to the divisions at HQ through the modalities in the implementation of the reviewed Strategic Framework.</p> <p>Regional Initiatives as delivery mechanisms ensure a collaborative approach of expertise from all locations of the Organization.</p>