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# FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Hundred and Sixty-first Session**

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**Human Resources Management**

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

**Ms Monika Altmaier  
Director  
Office of Human Resources  
Tel: +3906 5705 6422**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Committee is presented with progress on human resources management at FAO.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

- Members of the Finance Committee are invited to take note of the progress on human resources management.

Draft Advice

- **The Committee noted the progress on human resources management at FAO.**

## Vision and innovation

1. Transformational changes undertaken at FAO in recent years have been underpinned by unprecedented achievements in Human Resources (HR) management. The underlying principles driving these continuous HR improvements and innovations are the: (i) recruitment, appointment and development of the highest calibre of employees; (ii) alignment of HR management to the strategic and programmatic needs of the Organization; (iii) reflection of FAO's nature as a global development organization; and (iv) increased efficiency in HR processes and procedures.
2. The approach to recruiting and appointing staff in all categories has undergone a dramatic transformation since 2012, with a focus on availing the Organization of the best possible employees. FAO representatives are now appointed by means of a transparent, and merit-based process including managerial capacity assessments. Similarly, external assessments are applied for all senior level positions, alongside broader and more proactive outreach efforts.
3. The selection of professional staff is now overseen by small, division-based committees better equipped to screen the relevant and required capacities of candidates, in contrast to the prior set-up of a single, monolithic selection body. The introduction of competency-based assessments enables better identification of more suitable, and well-rounded candidates. The success of more dynamic professional selection committees has been replicated with regard to general service staff, and the establishment of rosters open to external applicants has broadened the pool of good candidates available to the Organization. Similarly, rejuvenation of the workforce is targeted by refinements to the Associate- and Junior-Professional Officers (APO/JPO) schemes.
4. Alongside recruiting first-rate employees, the Organization has also focused on developing the capacity of existing staff. Efforts in this regard include an enhanced performance management system, updated for 2016. Training schemes for FAO Representatives have been introduced, and targeted training plans and courses have been made available, and continue to be developed, for professional and general service level staff, including by use of modern, tele-access technology.
5. HR policies and initiatives have also been aligned in recent years to best serve the Organization's evolving strategic and programmatic needs. The strategic workforce planning exercises ensure that the appropriate human resources' capacity is available in functions and at the locations required to meet FAO's work needs and objectives. In addition, tailor-made capacity building tools and training courses are constantly developed to reflect changing priorities (such as courses on food security and nutrition) and processes and modalities (such as in support of decentralization of administrative and operational functions).
6. As part of the transformational changes, HR management efforts have also been undertaken to better reflect the international nature of FAO. While maintaining the primordial consideration of merit, the practice in appointment of staff (following recruitment and selection processes) has been adjusted to enable greater consideration of geographic representation (and gender) at a corporate level. In addition, the revamped 2016 geographic mobility programme has been improved based on lessons learned from the previous year, with the aim of oxygenating the Organization while providing staff with systematic opportunities for development and experience within the context of a global institution. In the same vein, the JPO cohorts of 2015 and 2016 have been assigned to duty stations around the world. Similarly, the open calls at global and regional level for applicants to general service positions, and the resulting appointment of non-local based candidates, has been recognized as a major innovation within the United Nations.
7. The pursuit of increased efficiency and reduction in costs remains a major priority in HR management at FAO. Streamlining of processes and procedures has been ongoing since 2012, including simplification of the Administrative Manual, the introduction of Standardized Operating Procedures, upgrading and fine-tuning functionalities in the corporate Enterprise Resource Planning system (GRMS), and the increased use of technology and automation (such as in recruitment and

internal staff services). Similarly, an overhaul of the Shared Services Centre in Budapest, with a new integrated business model will lead to provision of more effective HR and other administrative services in a more cost-effective manner.

### **Ongoing initiatives**

8. A summary of progress of major HR activities and initiatives is presented below.

#### *Staff Selection and Appointment*

9. The Organization has continued its efforts to open up the pool of candidates for General Service (GS) positions with a view to enhancing recruitment based on merit. As a result, since November 2015, 33 GS staff were appointed at Headquarters through the competitive process of the GSSCs (GS Staff Selection Committees), using the GS roster created with the Global Calls for expression of interest issued in 2015. Following positive results, updated Global Calls for expressions of interest for GS positions were issued in February 2016 for Headquarters and Regional Offices to refresh and update the rosters. These have received hundreds of applications from both external and internal candidates. The updated rosters will be used to fill vacant GS positions during 2016 through the GSSCs.

10. Similarly, a Global Call for expression of interest for temporary staff was issued in March 2016 which received about one thousand applications. This approach is helping the Organization to renew and extend the temporary assistance pool (TAP) using a merit-based approach while diversifying the workforce. In this way, the Organization will maintain flexibility for short-term assignments, consistent with the introduction of a maximum aggregate limit of 55 months of employment under this contractual modality, in line with practice in other international organizations.

11. Regarding professional recruitment, vacancy announcements for about 100 positions were issued since the beginning of 2016. The Professional Staff Selection Committees are meeting regularly to proceed with interviews and recommendations for selection. To further reduce the time between the issuance of a vacancy announcement and the filling of the position, new procedures were put in place recently to streamline the process.

12. To support the recruitment process, an Outreach Programme concept note has been prepared which aims to support FAO in: (a) accessing and recruiting the right skills mix; (b) identifying qualified candidates faster using the most effective sourcing techniques; (c) optimizing the diversity of the workforce; and (d) improving outreach in targeted geographic locations at country level. This Programme is accompanied by constant interaction with technical departments aimed at widening the recruitment base in a targeted and effective manner and improving visibility of FAO vacancies. This allows OHR to centralize the list of contacts and leverage the distribution list to better disseminate the vacancy announcements. OHR has also developed automated reports designed to assist in analyzing the effectiveness of the outreach techniques, i.e. number of applicants by source, number of new hires by source, etc.

#### *APO and JP Programmes*

13. Since November 2015, five new Associate Professional Officers (APOs) sponsored by the Netherlands, Germany (2) and Japan (2) have joined the Organization and four sponsored by Singapore, Republic of Korea, Japan and Belgium are expected to start their assignments in the remainder of 2016. The majority of APOs will be assigned to Headquarters. In addition, six new Junior Professionals (JPs) were appointed between September 2015 and March 2016. All of them were deployed to decentralized offices: RNE (Egypt), RAF (Ghana), SFS (Zimbabwe), SFE (Ethiopia), SFC (Gabon) and RAP (Thailand). To ensure their proper induction to the mission and values of the Organization and to help them understand FAO's policies and procedures, the APOs and the JPs attended a three-day Orientation workshop organized in March 2016.

14. The Organization is making an effort to ensure a high level of retention of former JPs, subject to individual performance, needs of the Organization and availability of resources. In addition, a survey was launched amongst JPs and APOs in order to obtain their feedback on various aspects of their experience at FAO such as quality of supervision, quality of learning experience, etc. This will be used to set new indicators, in addition to retention rates, for measuring the quality and effectiveness of these programmes.

15. The recruitment process for the next group of JPs has started and they again will be assigned to decentralized offices. It is expected that they will be on board before the end of the year.

#### *Non-staff Human Resources (NSHR)*

16. Further to a review of the NSHR category, OHR will be actively engaging with the Shared Services Centre (SSC) and other stakeholders for the implementation of the agreed actions that cover aspects such as improved compliance with procedural requirements and accountability mechanisms for the completion of Quality Assessment Reports, in order to ensure effective evaluation of the services rendered.

17. The HR Policy and procedures governing the use of Interns have been revised and revamped based on lessons learned to date. New aspects include a relaxation of the rules on duty travel and a special programme for those from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) has been put in place whereby they will receive additional financial support when not assigned in their home country.

#### *Performance Management, Development and Learning, Mobility*

18. The updated performance management policy and a new Performance Evaluation and Management System (PEMS) were launched in February this year and were accompanied by a comprehensive learning programme for all users. A quality control framework is now being set up in order to assess the quality of work plans and to monitor the use of PEMS throughout its various phases. The outcome of the evaluations will be analysed after the year-end in order to identify further opportunities to improve consistency in ratings. Learning programmes will be rolled out throughout the year to emphasize the importance of continuous feedback and constructive assessments on the occasion of the next two phases of the 2016 cycle.

19. In the field of learning, a number of programmes are currently in development and are planned to be launched in phases during this year in order to build the capacity of staff in different areas of work. These programmes cover different areas that include project cycle and related subjects like GEF and TCP, Managing for Results, Country Programming Framework and an innovative course on Food Security, Nutrition and Food Systems, which will be delivered in April. The latter will involve key players at headquarters and decentralized offices and will be instrumental in shaping new ways of thinking about Food Systems, Food Security and Nutrition and in updating staff members on contemporary research, as well as in building a network of agents ready to transfer updated knowledge and theory into future action at their level of responsibility.

20. A new Geographic Mobility Programme for 2016, which benefitted from the lessons learnt from last year's programme, was launched early this year. The exercise has been proceeding very well with strong support from managers at headquarters and the relevant decentralized offices.

#### *Social Security Matters*

21. After-service health insurance (ASHI) is an issue with long-term implications and is being analysed by FAO and also at the UN Common System level. FAO is an active member of an inter-agency ASHI Working Group which has recently produced eight recommendations to the UN General Assembly. The ACABQ welcomed the ASHI Working Group review and made its own recommendations to the General Assembly (GA). While participating in all relevant UN discussion forums, FAO is performing further analysis of the impact of the switch to the new percentage based

premiums on the actuarial deficit. Preliminary results show a slight decrease in the ASHI liability in light of the change. A more detailed report on this subject will be presented to the Finance Committee at its autumn 2016 session.

22. UNJSPF has been experiencing serious delays in the processing of new pension benefits since July 2015 when it switched to the new Integrated Pension Administrative System (IPAS). FAO is keeping track of all separations and the status of payments. Of the 505 FAO and WFP separations processed during the period June 2015 to February 2016 for which pension benefits were payable, only 74 cases (15%) had been fully processed and paid as of end February 2016. In view of this, the Staff Pension Committee (SPC) reiterated its concern at the long delay in processing pension benefits which resulted in a large number of pending cases and on its financial impact on former staff members, particularly those based in field locations. The SPC requested that the UNJSPF provide a detailed timeline of when it expects to reduce the backlog and resume normal processing times.

#### *Workforce planning*

23. Following development of the Workforce Planning project document, a prototype employing Hyperion Workforce Planning software was explored at the end of 2015 to automate manual workforce processes and deploy workforce modelling tools and corresponding reports, which enable the control of staffing/compensation expenses in real time and forecasting of compensation expenses at the global and departmental levels.

#### *Streamlining and Increased Efficiency*

24. Work continues to update and rationalise instruments containing rules and procedures in the human resources area. The entire Human Resources section of the Administrative Manual is being critically reviewed in order to bring it up to date and to reflect changes in rules and procedures where applicable. Revised Manual Sections are being uploaded onto the FAO Handbook on an ongoing basis as they are finalised. Of particular note, a new GRMS workflow has been set up for the processing of requests for certified sick leave which will strengthen administrative controls in this area. Relevant rules and procedures are being revised.

25. Three self-service HR/administrative tools were tested at the end of 2015: the certificate of employment, a rental subsidy calculator and a salary/separation emoluments calculator which, once operative, will reduce the workload of HR/administrative staff.

26. A new GRMS functionality has also been developed to automate and standardise globally all major staffing actions related to position management (E-PM) and an HR Help Desk in Budapest will be created to support users in the new functionality.