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COUNCIL

Hundred and Fifty-fifth Session

Rome, 5 - 9 December 2016

Report of the 162nd Session of the Finance Committee (23-25 May 2016)

Executive Summary

At its 162nd Session, the Committee considered a number of financial, budgetary and oversight matters relating to the World Food Programme (WFP), prior to their consideration by the Annual Session of the WFP Executive Board in June 2016.

Suggested action by Council

The Council is invited to note the views and recommendations of the Finance Committee in respect of matters considered by the Annual Session of the WFP Executive Board in June 2016.

Queries on this document may be addressed to:

David McSherry
Secretary, Finance Committee
Tel: +3906 5705 3719

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Table of Contents

	Pages
Introduction	3
World Food Programme Matters.....	3
Audited Annual Accounts, 2015.....	3
Appointment of two Executive Board Members to the Selection Panel for the Appointment of two Members of the Audit Committee	5
Use of the Immediate Response Account for Preparedness Activities	6
Annual Report of the Audit Committee.....	6
Annual Report of the Inspector General and Note by the Executive Director.....	7
Report of the External Auditor on the School Feeding Programme and WFP Management Response	8
Report of the External Auditor on WFP Aviation and WFP Management Response	9
Report on the Implementation of the External Auditor Recommendations.....	9
Update on the Financial Framework Review.....	10
Report on the Utilization of WFP's Advance Financing Mechanisms (1 January - 31 December 2015).....	11
Other Matters.....	12
Working Methods of the Finance Committee.....	12
Date and Place of the Hundred and Sixty-third Session	12
Documents for information	13

Introduction

1. The Committee submitted to the Council the following report of its Hundred and Sixty-second Session.
2. In addition to the Chairperson, Mr Khalid Mehboob, the following representatives of Members were present:
 - Mr Carlos Alberto Amaral (Angola)
 - Ms Kristina Gill (Australia)
 - Mr Antonio Otávio Sá Ricarte (Brazil)
 - Mr Xie Jianmin (China)
 - Mr Khaled M.S.H. Eltaweel (Egypt)
 - Mr Crisantos Obama Ondo (Equatorial Guinea)
 - Ms Hannah Laubenthal (Germany)
 - Mr Lupino jr. Lazaro (Philippines)
 - Mr Vladimir V. Kuznetsov (Russian Federation)
 - Ms Abla Malik Osman Malik (Sudan)
 - Ms Elizabeth Petrovski (USA)
3. The Chairperson informed the Committee that:
 - Ms Kristina Gill (Australia) had been designated to replace Mr Matthew Worrell for this session;
 - Mr Xie Jianmin (China) had been designated to replace Mr Niu Dun for this session;
 - Ms Hannah Laubenthal (Germany) had been designated to replace Mr Heiner Thofern for this session; and
 - Ms Elizabeth Petrovski (USA) had been designated to replace Ms Natalie Brown for this session.
4. A summary of the qualifications of the substitute representatives can be downloaded from the Governing and Statutory Body Web site at: <http://www.fao.org/unfao/govbodies/gsbhome/finance-committee/substitute-representatives/en/>
5. In addition, silent observers from the following Members attended the 162nd Session of the Committee:
 - Belgium
 - European Union
 - Italy
 - Japan
 - Netherlands

World Food Programme Matters

Audited Annual Accounts, 2015

6. The Committee discussed WFP's *Audited Annual Accounts 2015*, supported by a briefing made by the WFP Secretariat which detailed the key elements within the Audited Financial Statements.
7. The Committee was informed of the main reasons behind movements in key elements of Financial Statement II which contributed to the surplus in 2015 of USD 95 million in comparison with 2014 (USD 236 million). This was mainly due to the decrease in contribution revenue

(USD 4.8 billion against USD 5.4 billion in 2014) which, in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), was recognized when confirmed in writing by donors and the decrease in total expenses (USD 4.8 billion against USD 5.2 billion in 2014) which were recognized when goods and services are delivered.

8. The Committee was informed of the main reasons behind movements in the key elements of Statement I: the decrease in the cash and short-term investments (USD 1.6 billion against USD 1.7 billion in 2014); the increase in the contribution receivable balance (USD 2.3 billion against USD 2.2 billion in 2014); the increase in inventories (USD 650 million against USD 579 million in 2014); and the increase in employee benefit liabilities (USD 613 million against USD 566 million in 2014). The Committee was informed that the overall budgetary utilization in 2015 was 57 percent of the final needs-based budget in Financial Statement V, and that, commencing in 2015, Statement V included a Prioritized Plan which represented a prioritized plan of work based on estimated forecast contributions.

9. The Committee was informed that in 2015 the Secretariat had included for the fifth consecutive year a Statement on Internal Control, signed by the Executive Director, to provide additional assurance on the effectiveness of internal control in WFP. The Committee was informed that a 100 percent submission rate by all directors had been achieved. In addition, the Committee was informed that the internal control framework was revised in 2015 to reflect COSO¹ 2013 guidance with the update and issuance of new guidance material and the addition of new Assurance Statement questions on fraud and change management.

10. The Committee requested clarification on several technical aspects of the 2015 Annual Accounts:

Statement II (Statement of Financial Performance):

- The Committee noted the reduction of contribution revenue in 2015 and requested an update on the 2016 contribution revenue forecast. The Committee was informed that the 2016 contribution revenue forecast had increased from USD 4.9 billion to USD 5.3 billion due largely to expected significant contributions to the Syria operations.
- The Committee noted the reduction of staff costs and inquired if there was also a decrease in total number of staff. The Committee was provided clarifications that the reason for the decrease in staff costs was mainly due to an incremental expense in 2014 to account for the employee benefit liabilities relating to locally recruited staff as determined by the actuarial valuation. Without the impact of this 2014 incremental expense, the staff cost had increased in line with a slight increase in staff numbers.

Statement I (Statement of Financial Position):

- The Committee inquired on the advantages and disadvantages of pooling investment assets of the Rome-Based Agencies. The Committee was provided clarifications that the possibility of pooling investment assets had been reviewed by the UN Treasury working group, and it was found that the pooling was problematic given the different governance structures and investment objectives of the Rome-Based Agencies.

Statement V (Statement of Comparison of Budget and Actual Amounts):

- The Committee sought explanation for the 64 percent use of the Critical Corporate Initiatives (CCI) budget. The Committee was informed that the CCI included an approval of USD 18 million for 2015 which was part of a multi-year budget for certain initiatives (USD 18 million

¹ The Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission

for 2015 and USD 17 million for 2016). The unused 2015 budget would be carried forward to 2016 in line with the multi-year budget proposal.

- The Committee inquired whether Statement V in the future would include an updated Prioritized Plan and was informed that the use of an updated Prioritized Plan would be considered.

Statement of Internal Control:

- The Committee inquired on the status of the Country Office Monitoring and Evaluation Tool (COMET) roll out and was informed that the planning module was rolled out in 2014, that the implementation module was expected to be fully rolled out by the end of 2016 and that the monitoring module would be launched in 2016.
- The Committee requested confirmation on the Performance and Competency Enhancement (PACE) completion rate in 2015 and was informed that the 2015 completion rate was 97 percent.

External Audit Recommendation:

- The Committee received clarifications that the procedures for recording a receivable of the undistributed cash held by Cooperating Partners were being implemented; the Commodity Movement Processing and Analysis System (COMPAS) would be decommissioned in 2016; and Post Delivery Loss reporting procedures would be reviewed in light of Financial Regulation 12.4.

11. The Committee:

- a) **examined WFP's Audited Annual Accounts 2015, including the opinion of the External Auditor;**
- b) **welcomed the Statement of Internal Control by the Executive Director which provided specific assurance regarding the effectiveness of internal control;**
- c) **welcomed the continuous efforts taken to improve the effectiveness of internal control, including measures taken to address risk and internal control issues identified previously;**
- d) **welcomed the efforts to enhance the budget presentation in Statement V and encouraged the continued refinement of the presentation;**
- e) **noted the unqualified audit opinion from the External Auditor; and**
- f) **recommended that the Executive Board approve the Audited Annual Accounts, 2015.**

Appointment of two Executive Board Members to the Selection Panel for the Appointment of two Members of the Audit Committee

12. The Committee reviewed the request for the nomination of two Board members to sit on the selection panel for the selection of Audit Committee members, as follows: H.E. Mohammed S.L. Sheriff, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Liberia, and Dr Md Mafizur Rahman, Economic Counsellor, Alternate Permanent Representative of Bangladesh.

13. The Committee:

- a) **noted the proposed nominations of two Board representatives to the selection panel, recommended by the Executive Board Bureau; and**
- b) **recommended that their appointment to the selection panel be approved by the Executive Board at its Annual Session in June 2016.**

Use of the Immediate Response Account for Preparedness Activities

14. The Committee reviewed document *Use of the Immediate Response Account (IRA) for Preparedness Activities* presented by the WFP Secretariat.

15. The Committee was informed that the use of the IRA for this type of activity had first been approved by the Executive Board in 2004, in situations where there was no alternative funding source. Since then there had been no change in the authorized level for preparedness activities, despite significant increases since that time in WFP's annual income and its prioritized plan of work.

16. The Committee was informed that resources needed to be readily available for immediate deployment to preparedness activities, which would support WFP's readiness to respond and improve the effectiveness of the response itself. These resources were provided as a last resort by the Immediate Response Account, which could be deployed with minimal delay and ensure proper planning and preparation for a broad range of partners.

17. The Committee noted that the proposed increase in the annual level of the IRA for preparedness activities from USD 2 million to USD 6 million was broadly in line with the overall increase in the IRA target level, as well as the increases in WFP's income and its plan of work since the annual level was originally set in 2004.

18. **The Committee:**

- a) **considered the recommendations of the Secretariat in the document *Use of the Immediate Response Account for Preparedness Activities*; and**
- b) **recommended that the proposed use of the IRA for preparedness activities up to an annual limit of USD 6 million be approved by the Executive Board.**

Annual Report of the Audit Committee

19. The Audit Committee Chairperson presented the *Annual Report of the Audit Committee*, covering the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, during which the Audit Committee had met three times. Topics discussed at open sessions with WFP management, the Inspector General and the External Auditor covered the full scope of Audit Committee responsibilities set out in its terms of reference. Sessions with the Executive Director and the Executive Board Bureau had helped the Audit Committee identify the most important issues for its consideration.

20. The Committee considered the highlights of the report presented by the Audit Committee Chairperson including the completion of management's changes to the administration of justice process, improvements made to risk management and internal controls processes, the review of the Financial Framework and of the Policy on Country Strategic Plans and the required changes to the Information Technology architecture.

21. Following requests from the members, the Audit Committee Chairperson confirmed that the matters related to staff wellness and the further assessment of the reasons for the increase or decrease of reported cases of inappropriate activity would be added to the Audit Committee agenda at its coming sessions. The Committee expressed appreciation for the Audit Committee's attention to staff health and safety issues, particularly in light of where WFP operated, and looked forward to future discussions. It welcomed the Audit Committee's regular review of WFP's work in cash-based transfers. In response to concerns expressed over capacity gaps, the Committee noted Management's actions to enhance staff capacity and complete systems development, particularly through the implementation of critical corporate initiatives, and of its focus on the business model and internal control environment to ensure cash-based transfers risks were mitigated.

22. The Committee expressed appreciation for the Audit Committee's work, and noted the Audit Committee's positive opinion of WFP's work. Members also expressed appreciation to the Audit

Committee for establishing a process that allowed for the earlier distribution of the minutes of its meetings.

23. **The Committee:**

- a) **considered the *Annual Report of the Audit Committee* for the period 1 April 2015 - 31 March 2016;**
- b) **acknowledged the important role of the Audit Committee and encouraged the Audit Committee in its ongoing work;**
- c) **took note of all recommendations relevant to the work of the Audit Committee, including on internal audit, investigations, risk management and internal controls, treasury and investment oversight, review of the financial statements and accounting; and**
- d) **approved the submission of the report to the Executive Board at its June 2016 Annual Session for its consideration.**

Annual Report of the Inspector General and Note by the Executive Director

24. The Committee welcomed the *Annual Report of the Inspector General* and the *Note by the Executive Director on the Annual Report of the Inspector General*.

25. The Inspector General identified that the audit and investigative work performed in 2015 indicated a stable internal control environment. The internal control components and processes audited indicated a positive trajectory. Some challenges were identified in the areas of common logistic services, operational budget management, cash-based transfers (CBT) and information and communication technology, and are the result of the evolution of WFP's business model and processes. Management articulated consistent and structured measures to mitigate risks.

26. The Committee noted that in 2015, the governance of the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) had developed significantly. A new OIG Charter, a new Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy, and a new Internal Audit Strategy 2016-2020 were issued. The audit cycle approach had been replaced by a risk based approach, with a focus on cross sectorial work, allowing for more flexibility and delivery of value to WFP. New tools, such as Assurance Advisories and the Proactive Integrity Reviews (PIR), had been introduced.

27. In response to Committee concerns over the report's findings on control failures and other risk ratings:

- The Committee was informed by the Inspector General of the increased number of investigations, particularly for fraud and corruption. This did not reflect a deterioration of the control environment, but was the result of the change in the profile of staff, and in the typology and techniques of investigations. A mandatory training course for prevention of fraud and corruption had been launched and completed by almost seventy percent of staff.
- The Committee was informed that CBT continued to grow in volume, complexity and importance to WFP. Audit evidence identified improvements in the implementation of controls and the maturity of CBT processes.
- On closure of high and medium risk audit recommendations, in particular for CBT, the Committee was informed that the implementation rate of CBT agreed actions had increased in 2016.

28. The Committee was informed that the OIG staffing profile had changed. Highly specialized resources had been recruited at all levels, with a positive impact on the focus and quality of delivery. OIG was now fully staffed, with only one vacancy. 2015 has seen a static OIG budget, with a reduction in staff posts of seven percent. Extra resources had been provided for the introduction of the new counter fraud tools, including PIR.

29. The Committee welcomed the presentation by the Inspector General and expressed its satisfaction for the constructive working relationship between the Office of Inspector General and WFP Management in addressing Governance, risk management and control challenges.

30. **The Committee:**

- a) **considered the *Annual Report of the WFP Inspector General along with the Note by the Executive Director on this Annual Report*;**
- b) **welcomed the assurance on the Independence of the Office of the Inspector General provided through the Statement of Independence;**
- c) **noted the assurance opinion issued by the Inspector General that the oversight work performed did not disclose any significant weaknesses in the internal control, governance and risk management processes in place across WFP that would have a pervasive effect on achievement of WFP's objectives although some internal control, governance and risk management practices were noted in individual audit engagements which needed improvement; and**
- d) **recommended the WFP Executive Board to take note of the *Annual Report of the Inspector General* and encourage management to take advantage of the opportunities for further improvement highlighted in the report.**

Report of the External Auditor on the School Feeding Programme and WFP Management Response

31. The Committee discussed the *Report of the External Auditor on the School Feeding Programme* following a briefing by the External Auditor. The objective of the audit was to assess whether WFP was able to implement the school feeding programme economically, efficiently and effectively and help countries transition towards owning their own programmes. The audit covered the period January 2013 to June 2015 and included visits to nine Country Offices and three Regional Bureaux. The report included findings related to financial management, school feeding programmes as a safety net, nutrition and access to educational systems, project implementation, linking school feeding to local agricultural production, technical assistance for transition to nationally owned programmes, and the Centre of Excellence in Brasilia. The report included fifteen recommendations, which had been accepted by management.

32. The Committee requested and received clarification on issues including coordination with other organizations and national governments; the use of indicators for measuring results and identifying needs; evaluation of the impact of school feeding programmes; adaptation of school feeding programmes to the country context; and work to improve financial and performance analysis of school feeding at a corporate level, which was related to the financial framework review and development of the new corporate results framework.

33. **The Committee:**

- a) **reviewed the *Report of the External Auditor on the School Feeding Programme and the management responses to the recommendations*;**
- b) **noted that all recommendations had been accepted and recommended that the Executive Board urge management to fully implement them; and**
- c) **looked forward to the update on implementation via the *Report on the Implementation of the External Auditor Recommendations*.**

Report of the External Auditor on WFP Aviation and WFP Management Response

34. The Committee discussed the *Report of the External Auditor on WFP Aviation* following a briefing by the External Auditor. The objective of the audit was to ascertain whether WFP Aviation's operations were managed in an economical, efficient and effective manner and in compliance with the guidelines and manuals governing it. The audit covered the period January 2013 to June 2015 and included visits to six Country Offices and two Regional Bureaux. The report included findings related to aircraft selection, contract management, monitoring and oversight, customer service, and training of Aviation Safety Unit personnel, and made six recommendations, which had been accepted by management.

35. The Committee requested and received clarification on issues related to aviation contracting; WFP's assessment of air operators' performance and safety checks; the various standards governing aviation operators; the need for humanitarian aviation services in Syria and neighbouring countries; customer service provision; the use of the aviation service for transporting cargo; the number of aircraft in operation; and governing body engagement in WFP's role in providing common aviation services.

36. **The Committee:**

- a) **reviewed the *Report of the External Auditor on WFP Aviation and the Management Response* and took note of the recommendations;**
- b) **noted that all of the recommendations had been accepted by the management, and recommended that the Executive Board urge the Secretariat to fully implement the recommendations; and**
- c) **looked forward to the updates on implementation in the progress report on External Audit recommendations.**

Report on the Implementation of the External Auditor Recommendations

37. The Committee discussed the *Report on the Implementation of the External Auditor Recommendations* following a briefing by the Secretariat highlighting the recommendations that had been implemented and those which remained outstanding. Of the 50 recommendations included in the report, 23 were closed in the 2015-16 reporting cycle.

38. The Committee noted that the External Auditor had given views on all recommendations that the Secretariat deemed complete. The Committee noted that External Audit recommendations were entrusted to the responsible unit to take forward the action agreed with the External Auditor. The time required to implement the recommendations varied based on factors including the recommendation's complexity, whether it required system or procedural changes, and whether it required additional resources to implement.

39. **The Committee:**

- a) **considered the *Report on the Implementation of the External Auditor Recommendations*;**
- b) **noted the implementation rate of the outstanding recommendations;**
- c) **noted the new recommendations issued by the External Auditor in 2015;**
- d) **looked forward to receiving further updates on outstanding recommendations in the next *Report on the Implementation of the External Auditor Recommendations*; and**
- e) **recommended that the Executive Board take note of the *Report on the Implementation of the External Auditor Recommendations*.**

Update on the Financial Framework Review

40. The Committee welcomed the update on the progress of the Financial Framework Review (FFR) work streams: budgeting for operational effectiveness (BOE), resource-based planning (RBP) and macro-advance financing (MAF). It considered the Secretariat's efforts to align the development of the FFR outcomes with the drafting of the Strategic Plan (2017-2021), Policy on Country Strategic Plans (CSP) and the new Corporate Results Framework (CRF) to ensure linkages among the strategic, programmatic, performance management and financial frameworks as part of the integrated roadmap.
41. The Committee received an introduction to the principles of the country portfolio budget model which included: a results-oriented approach, harmonization of cost categories and equitable recovery of costs amongst donors. The Committee noted the Secretariat's intention to replace the current project-based system with a budget structure that would cover all country operations for a single calendar year to enhance results-based management at the country level.
42. The Committee recalled its previous discussions on the RBP and MAF, noting the work streams were driven by internal resource management needs. The Committee received an update on the approach using pilot countries currently underway, the results of which would be evaluated and communicated to the Executive Board and other governing bodies in the latter half of 2016, including an informal consultation in July 2016.
43. While expressing full support for the integrated roadmap, the Committee underlined the importance of receiving requested information in a timely manner in order to have sufficient time to understand and prototype the budget structure to make refinements in 2017 and ensure donor system readiness for a full roll-out in 2018. Within this context, the Committee sought clarification on the draft decision for the Annual Session. The Committee was informed that the draft decision referred to the review phase of the financial framework, which aimed to finalise a design concept that could be piloted during the course of 2017. The Committee expressed concern over the ambitious design timeline for 2016 and noted the indicative 2017 plan for the phased roll-out of the country portfolio budget structure to support the approved CSPs and undertake systems development in 2017.
44. The Committee was assured that the Secretariat was assessing the full extent of the impact on human resources, organizational structure and systems as part of organizational readiness.
45. In response to a query on information technology (IT) solutions, the Committee was informed that while the Secretariat was prototyping IT solutions through an agile systems development process which would accelerate systems development in 2017 for an implementation in 2018, basic design decisions were being prioritized.
46. In response to a query on budget control hierarchy, the Committee was informed about the two layers of budget control under which authority would be conferred. The Committee was assured that the new financial framework would provide the granularity to identify cost drivers.
47. The Committee was informed that the adjusted support costs and indirect support costs under the preliminary budget structure provided an opportunity to associate some costs under the implementation component of the structure.
48. The Committee was informed that emergencies would fall under the overall framework of the Country Strategic Plan with all resources flowing through the Country Portfolio Budget.
49. The Committee was reassured that a series of Informal Consultations and bilateral meetings would provide the basis for informed decisions during the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board.

50. **The Committee:**

- a) **reviewed the document on the *Update on the Financial Framework Review (FFR)*, a key component of the Integrated Road Map to maximise operational effectiveness;**
- b) **reviewed the proposed country portfolio budget (CPB) structure;**
- c) **took note of the progress on the three workstreams of the FFR: budgeting for operational effectiveness, resource-based planning and macro advance financing;**
- d) **looked forward to receiving for its review the conclusions of the Financial Framework Review which would be presented for approval at the 2016 Second Regular Session of the Executive Board; and**
- e) **recommended the Executive Board to take note of the *Update on the Financial Framework Review*.**

**Report on the Utilization of WFP's Advance Financing Mechanisms
(1 January - 31 December 2015)**

51. The Committee reviewed the *Report on the utilisation of WFP's advance financing mechanisms (1 January – 31 December 2015)* presented by the WFP Secretariat, including details on the volume of loans advanced through Internal Project Lending (IPL) and allocations made from the Immediate Response Account (IRA) in 2015.

52. The Committee was informed of the processes involved when deployment of these tools was considered, noting two critical questions which were asked each time to determine the path that would be followed for accessing the advance financing tools. The first of these questions concerned the availability of collateral (in the form of forecast contributions) for an advance. Should this exist, then Internal Project Lending was normally considered as the route to take. In the absence of collateral, and if the situation being faced represented a life-threatening need, the Immediate Response Account was available for use as a grant or an advance.

53. The Committee noted the dual purpose of the IRA as a thematic fund for life-threatening and emergency preparedness situations as well as a tool for providing advances where there were no donations or collateral available. Since the IRA was, by design, a fund that was constantly replenished through donor contributions, the conversion of an allocation into a grant should not be considered a failure.

54. The Committee received clarification that in light of these objectives, the current intention was for the IRA to be maintained as a separate facility as WFP moved towards a new Financial Framework and recognised the need to continue to improve understanding and visibility of this facility. The Committee was informed that IRA funding remained significantly short of target and the Secretariat encouraged donors to provide more funding to this thematic emergency fund.

55. The Committee was informed that the management of advance financing would be informed and improved through the lessons learned from the ongoing Macro Advance Financing pilots. The Committee was further informed of the importance of well-reasoned indicators for managing advances since, for example, the length of time an advance was outstanding may not be a good measure of performance, as the earliest availability of funds for a project was sometimes key to good management of advance facilities as well as efficient and effective delivery of project outcomes.

56. **The Committee:**

- a) **welcomed the *Report on the Utilization of WFP's Advance Financing Facilities (1 January – 31 December 2015)*, including on improvements made to the Immediate Response Account (IRA).**
- b) **invited the Executive Board to take note of the report.**

Other Matters

Working Methods of the Finance Committee

57. The Committee recalled its previous discussions on the criteria for submission of Executive Board documents to the FAO Finance Committee and the UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). In order to align these discussions with those of the respective bodies, the Secretariat would consult with colleagues in the UN on how this could be taken forward and report back to the Committee on this issue.

Date and Place of the Hundred and Sixty-third Session

58. The Committee was informed that the 163rd Session was scheduled to be held in Rome from 7 to 11 November 2016.

Documents for information

- Report of the Executive Director on the Utilization of Contributions and Waivers of Costs (General Rules XII.4 and XIII.4 (h)) (doc. FC 162/INF/2)