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COUNCIL

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Developments in Fora of Importance for the Mandate of FAO

Executive Summary

In keeping with Action no. 2.31 of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal, the Council is informed of developments in other fora of importance for FAO's mandate. Presentations will be made on the following topics at the 144th Session of Council:

- Recent developments in international nutrition activities;
- Observance of World Soil Day by the UN and Celebration of the International Year of Soils 2015;
- Ongoing UN-led discussions on the post 2015 UN Development Agenda, and FAO involvement;
- Tropical Agriculture Platform;
- Independent Evaluation of the Delivering as One initiative and Tirana Conference in June 2012; and
- Statistics for Decision-Making.

The above topics are presented to the 144th Session of the Council for information only.

I. Recent Developments in International Nutrition Activities

1. Nutrition is presently a high priority on the international agenda and is being dealt with in a variety of *fora* (including the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) as well as being the object of various coordination mechanisms in which FAO is actively engaged.

2. FAO has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the World Health Organization (WHO), The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food

Programme (WFP) for the WFP-hosted Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger (REACH) initiative, which is now expanding to 15 countries.

3. FAO is also actively engaged in the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN) and its reform. The SCN Secretariat, previously hosted in WHO, Geneva, is moving to FAO headquarters which will facilitate its engagement in the CFS Advisory Group and the future merger of SCN (harmonization at global level) and REACH (improved coordination at country level).
4. The Alliance Against Hunger and Malnutrition, initiated by the Rome-based agencies in the wake of the World Food Summit: Five years later (WFS:5y1) is expanding its role in over 30 countries.
5. The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Food Security and Nutrition is coordinating the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, which is now chaired by the Executive Director of UNICEF. Around 25 countries have joined the movement and efforts are being made to align resources behind a comprehensive agenda. Linkages between agriculture and nutrition are acknowledged as an increasing priority. Nutrition has gained visibility at major *fora*, including the G20 and the World Economic Forum, and have become the object of political commitment at the highest level in both developed and developing countries.

II. Observance of World Soil Day by the UN and celebration of the International Year of Soils 2015

6. Under the framework of the "Global Soil Partnership", FAO advocates for recognition of the importance of soils for achieving food security, as well as their pivotal role for further ecosystem services. Activities such as the observance of World Soil Day by the UN, assist in creating awareness and achieving recognition for soil as a finite, non-renewable natural resource. Despite the essential role that soil plays in the life of people, there is increasing degradation of soil resources due to inappropriate practices, burgeoning population pressures and inadequate governance thereof.
7. The increasing degree and extent of soil degradation processes due to mismanagement and land use changes are threatening this resource and urgent action is needed to reverse this trend if we are to assure the necessary food production for future generations, mitigation of climate change, provision of clean groundwater, and a scaling down of biodiversity loss. The International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) tabled a resolution in 2002 proposing 5 December as World Soil Day, which was not endorsed by the UN system. While Water, Forests, Biodiversity and Desertification are recognized by the UN system and are well supported at the decision making levels, this does not occur with soils, which is a natural resource upon which Water, Forests, Biodiversity and Desertification depend.
8. Under the framework of the Global Soil Partnership, the International Union of Soil Sciences has requested the support of the United Nations to recognize and dedicate one day a year to this important resource, recognizing that soils are the key to addressing the current and future pressures of a growing population. Recognition, advocacy and support for promoting sustainable management of soils is essential to guarantee healthy soils for a food, and further ecosystem services, secure world. Awareness, advocacy and extension at all levels on the importance of soils should be supported by specific activities, supported by the United Nations System, such as the celebration of the International Year of Soils in 2015.

III. Ongoing UN-led discussions on the post 2015 UN Development Agenda, and FAO involvement

9. The UN system-wide preparations for the definition of a Post-2015 UN development agenda started in 2011 and are fast proceeding under the leadership of the Secretary-General. The process will continue until the UN General Assembly in 2015, when a new development framework should be adopted. A significant landmark will be the Special Event of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2013. Numerous events and different inter-agency mechanisms are contributing to this process, including:

- The Secretary-General's Post 2015 Task Team (TT), tasked to prepare a report for the Secretary-General, including a unified vision and roadmap for the definition of a Post 2015 UN development agenda. The TT has held a series of discussions on issues such as: the assessment of the current MDG framework; emerging development challenges; global partnerships for development; area specific development targets and possible format of the post 2015 Development Agenda.
- The Task Team on Lessons Learned in the MDGs Monitoring under the Inter-Agency and Expert Group (IAEG) on MDG indicators, which provides technical inputs to guide the formulation of the post-2015 monitoring framework.
- National and thematic consultations, as part of the 2012 Work Plan of the UNDG MDG Task Force, the outcomes of which will also feed into the discussions on the post 2015 agenda.

10. FAO is actively involved in all the above processes, as they provide an opportunity for the Organization to raise awareness and visibility of the crucial importance of hunger eradication and food security and nutrition for sustainable development. These processes are also providing opportunities for enhanced collaboration between FAO and the other Rome-based Agencies, WFP, IFAD and Bioversity International, to jointly raise the visibility of agriculture, food security and nutrition issues in the negotiations.

11. There are clear links between the Post-2015 UN development agenda process and the forthcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). The outcomes of this Conference will be of critical importance to the formulation of a post 2015 UN development agenda, including the relation of the MDGs with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are being discussed in the context of the preparations for Rio+20.

IV. Tropical Agriculture Platform

12. The Declaration of the G20 Agriculture Ministers Meeting held in Paris, France, in June 2011, stated that it welcomed work by FAO and interested G20 members to develop a platform for capacity building in tropical agriculture in developing countries. A concept paper, summarizing the possible nature and scope of the Tropical Agriculture Platform was developed by FAO, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), *Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária* (EMBRAPA), and others. The paper was presented to the G20 Conference on Agricultural Research for Development held in Montpellier, France, in September 2011, and the G20 Presidency statement published after the Conference stated that the Tropical Agriculture Platform outlined by FAO can contribute to fostering knowledge sharing and enhancing capabilities, in cooperation with interested G20 Agricultural Research Systems through, among other initiatives, the identification of appropriate capacity development practices, the consolidation of best training practices and the promotion of modalities to support continuous learning and improve ownership by national stakeholders in developing countries.

13. In December 2011, at the invitation of the G20, FAO organized an Informal Stakeholder Consultation to elaborate a programme for developing the Platform. The Consultation analyzed and agreed upon the justification for the Platform and the basis of the technical components. The Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension of FAO has completed a programme proposal, with input from the participants.

V. Independent Evaluation of the Delivering as One initiative and Tirana Conference in June 2012

14. The UN Secretary General has recently launched the second generation of the 'Delivering as One' (DaO) initiative as part of his five year action agenda. Over 40 member countries (including DaO countries and donors) will meet in Tirana, Albania, from 27 to 29 June 2012 to discuss the results

of the DaO Independent Evaluation, in particular focusing on how to carry the “Delivering as One” approach beyond the pilot phase, and including the role of specialized agencies in this process.

15. The Technical Cooperation Department of FAO is the Co-Chair of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Organizing Committee for Tirana, together with United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). The Tirana Conference will be a key milestone in the roadmap to the 2012 Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR), to be discussed by the UN General Assembly in November 2012. The QCPR (previously called the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, TCPR) provides overall direction to UN operational activities for development and has been endorsed by the FAO Conference with a biennial reporting schedule.

VI. Statistics for Decision Making

17. The 43rd Session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) was held at UN Headquarters in New York from 28 February to 2 March 2012. A total of 135 countries represented by their national statistical offices and 47 international agencies participated in the meeting, during which over 60 side events were held. The key items of relevance for FAO were: agricultural statistics, environmental-economic accounting and the Busan Action Plan on statistical development.

18. The Commission endorsed the Global Action Plan to implement the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, developed by FAO and the World Bank, in close consultation with country representatives and a large number of national and international experts. The Commission also endorsed the related governance arrangements, highlighting the need to take into account varying regional and country circumstances and specific needs, and the importance of good coordination between the global, regional and national levels, local government and development partners.

19. The Commission requested FAO to report back to the UNSC on an annual basis on the implementation of the global strategy at global and regional levels. The Commission endorsed the proposal to establish an Interagency Expert Group (IAEG) that will bring countries and agencies together to develop and document good practices and guidelines on concepts, methods and statistical standards for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development. The IAEG will report back to the Commission on its activities as appropriate.