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para la  
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## PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

### Hundred and Fourteenth Session

Rome, 11 - 15 November 2013

### Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Africa

### MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

- In line with the recommendations of the 112<sup>th</sup> session of the Programme Committee (CL 145/6 para. 24.b) concerning modalities for saving costs, while ensuring adequate access to information contained in Evaluation reports, document PC 114/2 is presented as a comprehensive executive summary translated in FAO languages, while the Evaluation report in its entirety is published on the FAO Evaluation Web site in the original language.

#### Guidance sought by the Programme Committee

- The Programme Committee may wish to provide its views and guidance on the key issues in the Evaluation report, and to the response to the recommendations and proposed follow-up actions by Management.

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

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1. FAO Management welcomes the *Evaluation of FAO's Regional and Subregional Offices for Africa*. It is an important and timely contribution to the ongoing strengthening of FAO's capacity and impact within Africa and other regions.
2. Members have reviewed a series of recent proposals and actions submitted by Management to strengthen the capacity of FAO's decentralized offices. At its 144<sup>th</sup> session in June 2012, Council endorsed the main thrust of Management's approach to decentralization and supported the proposals submitted.<sup>1</sup> Management appreciates the fact that the Evaluation's findings and recommendations are strongly in line with the ongoing approach and many of the actions that are already being implemented. This alignment assures that the Evaluation will have a direct bearing on future Management decisions and actions. As with the two previous evaluations of regional and subregional offices (Near East and Europe),<sup>2</sup> Management also recognizes that the relevance and value of the Evaluation's findings extend beyond the Africa region. For the same reason, Management looks forward to the Evaluations of FAO's Regional and Subregional offices in Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean.
3. Management takes this opportunity to compliment the work of the Evaluation Team. The Evaluation Team has been open, committed and constructive in their engagement throughout the evaluation process. Management congratulates the Evaluation Team on its commitment to ensure that the findings and recommendations draw upon the widest possible range of views and opinions, encompassing partners, Members and FAO staff and Management. This has led to rich, informed and well-balanced findings. The final report is well written and beyond the recommendations, constitutes a rich resource of information, analysis and viewpoints. Finally, Management recognises that the Office of Evaluation has ensured that the Evaluation was well-managed and supported.
4. The effective functioning of FAO's decentralized offices lies at the heart of many of the transformative changes that have been implemented during the 2012-2013 biennium and will continue into the next biennium. FAO is committed to continuous improvement and an ever-stronger focus on results and impact, particularly at the country level. Similar findings and recommendations have been made by previous evaluations. What is noteworthy is the timing of the Africa region evaluation, coinciding as it does with Management's need for information, particularly with regard to strengthening capacity in regional and subregional offices in order to increase FAO's impact and effectiveness in the context of implementing the new Strategic Framework. Management concurs with the overall findings of the Evaluation, namely that good progress has been made in: (i) priority setting and strategic planning; (ii) partnership development; and (iii) resource mobilization, but that further work is required with regard to: (i) programme design and implementation; and (ii) technical support (ES50).
5. The Evaluation report contains a great deal of relevant, useful and practical information and analysis that will contribute to the further fine-tuning or revision of existing processes and arrangements. For example, Management has already drawn upon the Evaluation's analysis to support recent and ongoing reviews on issues, such as quality assurance in the project cycle; distribution and reporting of administrative and operational support; skills mix options in regional offices (under Recommendation 2); staffing contract options in country offices; strengthening resource mobilization capacities in decentralized offices; and maximizing benefits from the integration of FAO's emergency and development work, particularly at the country level. There are other examples throughout the report. Management remains committed to using the information contained within the report to contribute to the continuous improvement of FAO's operations at regional, subregional and country levels.
6. The evaluation recommends that FAO "increase the size and skill mix of the subregional Technical Teams" (Recommendation 3.1). In this regard, the evaluation suggests that the four current subregional teams be consolidated into two technical teams. This is in line with Management's

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<sup>1</sup> CL 144/REP para. 17

<sup>2</sup> PC 106/5 - FC 138/22; PC 113/3

proposals to transform Subregional Offices into technical hubs<sup>3</sup> and to merge the Subregional Office for West Africa (SFW) into the Regional Office.<sup>4</sup> FAO Council “*supported the transformation of Subregional Offices into technical hubs, and emphasized that the staff composition of the technical hubs should be tailored to local needs*”.<sup>5</sup> Whilst Management therefore fully supports this suggestion in principle, any decision to change the number and/or location of subregional offices can only be made with endorsement by FAO governing bodies. Management looks forward to further guidance and decision on this issue.

7. The Evaluation makes fifteen recommendations relating to country offices (5 recommendations), the regional office (3), technical teams and subregional offices (3) and headquarters (4). Each recommendation is accompanied by a number of “suggested actions” for consideration by Management and based on the analysis and findings presented within the main body of the Evaluation report. In some cases it is necessary to comment on specific “suggested actions” to understand the Management response to the recommendation. Management accepts eleven of the recommendations, and partially accepts four:

- Recommendation 1.3 on catalytic funding at the country level
- Recommendation 1.4 on FAOR rewards
- Recommendation 2.1 on the technical functions of the Regional Office
- Recommendation 2.2 on RAF skills mix

8. Further information is provided in the attached Matrix. Management also takes careful note of the many suggestions linked to individual recommendations.

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<sup>3</sup> CL 144/5 para. 25

<sup>4</sup> CL 144/15 para. 49

<sup>5</sup> CL144/REP para 21.c

Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<b>Country Offices</b>					
<b>Recommendation 1.1:</b> To FAORs with the support of TC and OSD – As a matter of priority, each Country Office undertake an internal review to establish which of the two strategies described above is the most appropriate for the specific Country Office context, and develop an immediate action plan to strengthen FAO impact. <sup>6</sup>	<b>Accepted</b>	(i) Proceed with CPF completion and preparation of Country Resource Mobilization Plans; and (ii) Country Offices Operational Work Plan (CWP) for 2014-15 will be completed by end January 2014. These will identify the resource needs for effective programme delivery during 2014-15.	RAF, FAORs; TC and OSD in supporting role	PWB 14-15	N
<b>Recommendation 1.2:</b> To OSD: In support of the approach proposed by each Country Office, and taking into consideration capacity assessment undertaken in 2011 and 2012 in the Africa region, establish a corporate training programme. Elements of such training would include resource mobilization, project and budget formulation, communication, administration and finance and results-based monitoring.	<b>Accepted</b>	Complete a comprehensive training needs assessment and develop a costed action plan to be implemented during 2014-15 biennium.	RAF, and OHR	2014-15	Y

<sup>6</sup> The first strategy, proposed in contexts where voluntary funding is available, involves the deliberate building of more autonomous country level operational and technical teams with skills in programme development, partnership, communication, and resource mobilization. The second strategy, in resource limited contexts, involves more intensive and responsive application of TCP resources and of FAO's high level expertise at headquarters and in the multidisciplinary teams to support small country offices in core areas of FAO's work.

Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<b>Recommendation 1.3:</b> To OSD and OSP – Increase the immediate availability of catalytic funding for Country Office support to Government and for programme implementation.	<b>Partially accepted</b> Management agrees with the principle of strengthening the use of TCP funding to support CPF implementation, but does not agree with the suggested actions for achieving this and instead makes reference to proposals made in document JM 2013.2/2.	Pending endorsement of governing bodies, implement proposed actions to enhance the TCP, in particular with regard to the TCP Facility (JM 2013.2/2).	TC (TCP) and OSP (AOS)	2013/2014	N
<b>Recommendation 1.4:</b> To OSD and the ADG-RR – Enable and encourage dedicated FAO leadership at country level by rewarding excellent FAOR performance.	<b>Partially accepted</b> Management fully agrees that ensuring strong FAO country leadership remains a priority. It does not agree with one of the suggested actions on FAOR post grading.	Significant changes have been made regarding the recruitment of FAORs and performance monitoring, in line with the suggested actions. A reward and recognition policy will be finalised. Whilst Management agrees fully with the aim of this recommendation, it is seeking to address the issues more broadly, and in the specific case of “rewards” for good performing FAORs, believes that this should be part of a broader corporate rewards and recognition policy and not necessarily to the classification of the posts.	OSD and OHR	2014-15	N

Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<b>Recommendation 1.5:</b> To TC – Country Offices should participate in the formulation of and assume direct responsibility for the country components of sub-regional, regional and global programmes using either delegated authority from the budget-holder, or the “baby” project modality under a central co-ordinating unit, in order to consolidate FAO’s activities in the country and create synergies between the now often disparate elements.	<b>Accepted</b>	Action will be taken to increase responsibility/authority of decentralized offices for regional, subregional (and where relevant, global) programmes being implemented in regions, subregions and countries.	TC, RAF, technical departments, FAORs	2014	N
<b>Regional Office</b>					
<b>Recommendation 2.1:</b> To the ADG-RR – Focus the substantive technical work of the Regional Office on (i) co-ordinating normative work and its policy dimensions and (ii) leadership of the regional dimension of the Organization’s technical networks.	<b>Partially accepted</b> Management agrees with the spirit of the recommendation, but believes that RAF technical officers will need to continue supporting country-level programmes and projects.	Within the reviewed Strategic Framework, FAO aims to achieve results at global, regional, subregional and country level under each of its Strategic Objectives. The regional office takes the lead on the achievement of results at regional level. The subregional office leads the achievement of results at subregional level. The subregional office is the first port of call to support the formulation and implementation of country programmes, with the support of regional office when	RAF	2014-15	N

Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
		required expertise may not be available at subregional level.			
<b>Recommendation 2.2:</b> To the ADG-RR – Re-profile five of the current professional technical posts in RAF to build capacity to provide a wider range of services to Country Offices and Africa-based governing and statutory bodies.	<b>Partially accepted</b> Management agrees that the functions listed in the recommendation are critical, but not at the expense of abolishing other technical roles of the Regional Office.	Management believes that it is important to ensure that regional offices have the capacity to address the areas identified (training, resource mobilization, communications, results-based management, conference and events). However, it does not believe that it is possible to eliminate five technical positions. Instead, it believes that these functions can be provided through revised skills mixes in the Regional Office and the use of non-staff human resources.	RAF	2014-15	Y
<b>Recommendation 2.3:</b> To CS – Commission a work organization and performance analysis of the RAF office in order to improve existing capacity in the administration and operations sections for more efficient and effective service.	<b>Accepted</b>	Pursue current initiative to undertake work organization and performance analysis of RAF.	RAF, CS	2014	N

Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<b>Technical Teams and SROs</b>					
<b>Recommendation 3.1:</b> To OSD – Increase the size and skill mix of the sub-regional Technical Teams.	<b>Accepted</b> Although the suggested action of consolidating technical support in two subregional teams requires more discussion and analysis.		DDO, DDK, RAF		N
<b>Recommendation 3.2:</b> To the ADG-RR – Strengthen Technical Team management arrangements.	<b>Accepted</b>	The Regional Representative/ Assistant Director-General will supervise all FAORs directly.	RR/ADG, RAF	2013	N
<b>Recommendation 3.3:</b> To Regional Technical Officers and members of the sub-regional Technical Teams – Establish broader technical networks that include all FAO technical expertise in the region and expand their use.	<b>Accepted</b>	Will be part of corporate roll-out of technical networks as foreseen under Objective 6 for 2014-15.	Global	2014-15	N
<b>Headquarters</b>					
<b>Recommendation 4.1:</b> To OSD, TC and CS – Review and streamline programme cycle procedures.	<b>Accepted</b>	The programme cycle procedures are being updated and reviewed in line with the recommendation, including the full alignment of TCP procedures with the new programme cycle procedures.	OSD, TC and CS in consultation with DDO and DDK	2014	N



Evaluation Recommendation	Management response Accepted, partially accepted or rejected and comment on the Recommendation	Management plan			
		Action to be taken	Responsible unit	Timeframe	Further funding required (Y or N)
<b>Recommendation 4.2:</b> To OSD and OSP – Streamline priority setting and planning processes.	<b>Accepted</b>	CPF and related priority-setting procedures will be streamlined, including heightening alignment with UNDAFs and strengthening linkages with RECs.	OSD, RAF in consultation with DDO, DDK and OSP	2014-15	N
<b>Recommendation 4.3:</b> To CS, OSD and CIO – Provide one-stop-shop guidance online on the most current policies, procedures, responsibilities and authorities related to decentralized offices and field programme operations.	<b>Accepted</b>	Design one-stop shop guidance and put on Web site.	CS, OSD and CIO	2014-2015	Y
<b>Recommendation 4.4:</b> To the ADG-RR, OSD and CSH – Through better succession planning, introduction of a mobility policy and the abolition of vacancy management as a budget strategy, seek to address the skills mix issue and reduce the chronic vacancies in the region that undermine decentralized offices' capacity.	<b>Accepted</b>	This recommendation is in-line with the strategy for HR management, post planning and post budgeting.	OHR, OSP in close consultation with DDO	2014-15	N