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FINANCE COMMITTEE

Hundred and Fifty-fourth Session

Rome, 26 - 30 May 2014

**Progress Report on Implementation of the Human Resources Strategic
Framework and Action Plan**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- At its 151th Session in November 2013, the Committee was provided with a comprehensive progress report on the implementation of the 2012-13 Human Resources Strategic Framework and Action Plan.
- Since November 2013, significant progress has been made on a number of human resources initiatives, as detailed in the present progress report, and a new Human Resources Strategy has been developed (Annex 1)
- As requested by the Committee, a regional update on human resources is also provided.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

- Members of the Finance Committee are invited to take note of progress on human resources initiatives, of the current Human Resources Strategy and of the updated Human Resources Action Plan.

Draft Advice

- **The Committee took note of progress on human resources initiatives and of the regional update on human resources as requested at its 151st Session in November 2013.**
- **The Committee took note of the current Human Resources Strategy and of the updated Human Resources Action Plan.**

1. Since the 151th Session of the Finance Committee in November 2013, significant progress has been made on a number of human resources initiatives. A summary of achievements is presented below.
2. The current Human Resources Strategy and an updated Human Resources Action Plan are attached to this report as Annexes 1 and 2. The Action Plan includes initiatives begun in 2012-13 and new initiatives provided for under the current Human Resources Strategy.

Human Resources Strategy

3. The Organization's vision for human resources management, and major initiatives aimed at achieving HR objectives and goals are described in the Human Resources Strategy that is attached as Annex 1. The Human Resources Strategy will guide the work of the Organization in relation to human resources management over the next three years. The premise of the strategy is that the knowledge, skills and commitment of employees constitute the Organization's most important asset. An effective and efficient human resources management is key to supporting managers, individual employees and the Organization as a whole in attaining its Strategic Objectives and delivering FAO's mandate.

Overview of current human resources initiatives

Competency Framework - Generic Job Profiles - Performance Management

4. These three interlinked initiatives have been or are being completed. These initiatives contribute to the establishment of a competency-based approach to recruitment and performance management, which recognizes the importance of hiring and managing staff on the basis of both technical skills and delivery of tangible work plan outputs, and equally important enabling competencies, such as management, teamwork and effective communication.
5. The central initiative is the corporate competency framework that was revised through extensive input from staff in 2013 and introduced in the Organization at the start of 2014. The framework comprises three values; five core competencies applicable to all staff up to and including the P4 level; and six leadership competencies applicable at the P-5 level and above. The framework is being integrated in all core HR processes and functions. Competency-based interviewing is currently being introduced as part of the recruitment process for internationally recruited staff members in the professional category, and human resources staff in headquarters and the regions have already been trained to support the departmental and regional professional selection panels. The revised competencies have also been included in the individual FAO performance management system (PEMS) of staff members as of the 2014 performance cycle and staff can identify learning opportunities by competencies in the learning@fao.org platform.
6. An intranet site is available which guides staff in how to apply the competencies, and video conferences and information sessions have been held across the Organization. Further materials will be developed throughout 2014, such as booklets with tips for developing competencies as well as examples from staff of how they apply them in their work.
7. The second project is the introduction of Generic Job Profiles (GJPs). As at March 2014, GJPs have been developed for circa 80% of general service posts and 60% of professional posts. The goal of this project is to establish standard post descriptions for groups of jobs with similar responsibilities to simplify and shorten the process of advertisement of vacant posts. Competencies are systematically included in the GJPs and in the vacancy announcements and all candidates will therefore be assessed against these. Internal guidelines have been developed to provide an overview of the purpose, definitions and procedures proposed for the introduction of GJPs as a basis for effective Human Resources Management at FAO.
8. The revision of the PEMS policy framework is being finalised. Guidelines to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both staff and managers in the performance evaluation process have been drafted and are under final review. As noted above, the competencies have been included in the individual PEMS of staff, thereby ensuring that all staff members are evaluated against the exact same

set of competencies. Furthermore, and as requested by senior management, the PEMS process is currently being reviewed, taking into account best practices within and outside the United Nations Common System. A rebuttal procedure has been redrafted and internal consultations completed. The procedure is expected to be issued in the second quarter of 2014, and the rebuttal process will be in place by the end of 2014.

9. A corporate mechanism to recognise high-performance and address under-performance is a fundamental element of the PEMS policy framework. Work is underway on a draft recognition and performance improvement policy, as well as on a promotion policy. As previously indicated, these policies should be introduced in the course of 2014, with a target implementation date of start 2015, following the completion of the 2014 annual appraisal review.

Appointment and Selection Procedures

10. The selection and appointment procedure for international professional staff in regular budget funded positions has been changed. Human Resources will have a more active role under the revised selection process, providing additional value to the hiring manager at every step of the process. The adoption of the systematic use of competency-based interviews, as well as more consistent use of tests and reference checks, will improve the quality and transparency of the selection decisions. These revised procedures, under which the central selection committee has been abolished and replaced by departmental and regional selection committees, should also significantly reduce the timeframes to fill vacant posts. The overall recruitment timeframe is expected to be reduced to a maximum of 120 days from the approval of the vacancy announcement to the final selection decision. The selection and appointment procedures for national professional staff are currently being reviewed and guidelines will be issued shortly. The appointment and selection process for staff members in the general service category, including the temporary assistance pool in Headquarters, will also be examined during the on-going biennium.

11. In this regard, the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs), i.e. FAO, IFAD and WFP, will shortly enter into a framework agreement to (i) establish a Central Roster for the recruitment of temporary/short-term staff in the General Service category for the three RBAs and (ii) to open vacancies for regular positions in the General Service category in each of the Rome based agencies for application to all General Service staff of the RBAs. This will greatly facilitate movement of the staff between the RBAs, as staff members will be eligible to apply for internally advertised positions in all three RBAs, and thereby increase the opportunities for career development of the staff.

12. iRecruitment, which was introduced in October 2011 for the processing of professional vacancies in the Regular Programme, has played an important role in streamlining the recruitment process and reducing the length of the pre-screening procedure. Vacant senior-level posts (D1 and above) are now processed through iRecruitment, as well as applications of consultants and subscribers to personal service agreements.

13. A corporate Recruitment Roster is being put in place at FAO using the iRecruitment system, enabling access to large pools of qualified candidates for targeted recruitment activities and will play an important role in implementing outreach activities to help the Organization meet its gender and geographic targets for staff. The Non-Staff Recruitment Roster will also assist hiring units to identify potential candidates for assignments as Consultants or Subscribers to Personal Service Agreements. FAO will also establish and maintain a specialized function-oriented roster (of pre-endorsed candidates to quickly meet the diverse needs in resources and skills of the Organization. The FAO roster functionality is being developed using the existing FAO corporate systems and technology. Modification of the existing software was initiated in December 2013 and final system changes, incorporating feedback from the initial round of user testing in February/March, have been finalized. Acceptance testing of final revisions and user sign-off is planned for early April 2014. This phase will be followed by a live Pilot and a systematic training and deployment to FAO offices during the remainder of 2014.

14. System enhancements and a new screening methodology has been introduced in order to enhance the FAO Global Emergency Response Rosters, which provides surge support for UN Level 3

emergencies. Preparatory activities for the Emergency Response Roster Pilot began in January 2014, with published Calls for Applications from internal staff and external candidates. Screening, interviewing, and verification of candidates is ongoing.

Progress on geographic representation and gender balance

15. The need to increase the number of equitably-represented countries continues to be a priority issue. While the paramount consideration in the appointment of staff remains the necessity to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, FAO's recruiting managers are encouraged to "pay due regard to the importance of selecting personnel recruited on as wide a geographical basis as is possible", in line with the spirit of Paragraph 3, Article VIII of the FAO Constitution. The Scale of Contributions for 2014-2015, approved by the Conference in June 2013 impacted the desirable range of equitable geographical representation of Member States; these new ranges took effect from 1 January 2014. Several outreach activities in the area of recruitment are being launched to also address the geographic representation, as explained under the section on "Regional Updates on Human Resources" below.

16. Efforts over the past years have resulted in the steady increase of women at an overall base. Previous Medium Term Plan (2010-2013) corporate gender targets (Professional 38%, Director and above 20%) have been fulfilled or even exceeded as at 1 March 2014: in professional posts at headquarters to 43 percent as at 1 March 2014 and an increase in all locations to 38 percent; and an increase of women at Director level and above to 21.4%. A set of measures and guidelines to assist managers and staff towards achieving gender parity is being finalized.

Junior Professional Programme

17. In 2011, the first cohort of 18 Junior Professionals (JPs) joined FAO on initial two year assignment terms, and six additional JPs joined the Organization in the last quarter of 2013. The vacancy announcements for the 19 JPs who will form the third cohort were posted in December 2013, with anticipated entry on duty of all selected JPs by June 2014. Measures to facilitate the retention of JPs continue to be explored. To date, from the 18 JPs hired under the first cohort, 14 have been retained and are funded by the host units (i.e. 8 JPs under a fixed term contract and 6 employed under non staff human resources contracts).

Corporate Mobility Policy

18. A Corporate Mobility Policy was introduced in December 2013. The Corporate Mobility Scheme provides for temporary mobile postings, as well as long-term geographic reassignments for a duration of one year or more. Geographic reassignment is mandatory for all international professional staff members who are against a post classified as rotational. A post is qualified rotational, based on its nature and functions and on the availability of the same or similar posts in different duty stations and offices of the Organization. The classification exercise of rotational positions has begun; as at the start of April out of 1345 posts (total number of international professional posts reviewed in accordance with the criteria determined in the policy) 538 had been designated as rotational.

19. The reassignment scheme is managed by the Office of Human Resources through a yearly mobility exercise supported by a central mobility staffing committee. One of the functions of this committee is to establish the target number of geographic reassignments to be undertaken each year based on different factors such as the changing needs of the organization, the regional priorities, as well as available funding.

20. Other key features of the scheme are that geographic mobility (within FAO or amongst UN Common System Organizations) is recognized as an important criterion in selection and promotion decisions and that managers are expected to be actively involved in promoting mobility and preparing biennial mobility plans as part of the staffing exercise for their Department or Office, with the support of HR.

Introduction of strategic workforce planning capability

21. The workforce planning guidelines have been applied for the first time in the preparation of the 2014-15 plan. The current workforce planning exercise consists in identifying gaps in the workforce which may require changes in the skill mix. The results of the workforce planning exercise will be used throughout the 2014-15 implementation cycle to guide human resources strategies in the areas of recruitment, mobility, learning and development, in order to ultimately generate the capacities and skills required by strategy teams and technical departments and offices.

Learning Strategy

22. Particular attention has been given to a more rational use of staff development and learning funds and strengthening the associated planning function. Cost-effective virtual delivery and e-learning components are being introduced into corporate programmes, where possible, and all offices are being encouraged to carefully plan and identify priorities and avail e-learning opportunities.

23. A revised learning strategy was developed in 2013 and implementation is addressing the following key goals:

- (i) building the capacity of staff in technical and programming matters, and managing for results: a number of programmes which target FAORs are currently under development including the areas of resource mobilization, project cycle and programming principles as well as plans for updating a managing for development results curriculum;
- (ii) expanding the e-learning curriculum and frameworks: the outreach to decentralized offices has been given particular attention, thus seeing an increase of course completion and increased awareness of learning opportunities by employees at all locations;
- (iii) delivering corporate programmes from induction to retirement: programmes are ongoing with a particular focus this year on multilingualism to ensure that professional staff possess appropriate level of knowledge of at least two official languages;
- (iv) delivering corporate programmes from induction to retirement: programmes are ongoing with a particular focus this year on the testing and acquisition of a second language for professional staff;
- (v) supporting organizational effectiveness and promoting desired behaviours; competency development programmes are given high priority to ensure that all employees have access to learning opportunities to sustain and develop FAO competencies. Management and leadership continues to be a high priority with a particular focus on managing teams and staff effectively and competency development programmes are available for GS staff;
- (vi) developing the administrative, financial, and operational capacity of employees: e-learning programmes are under development as a priority in 2014 in the areas of administration, finance and operational and will be made available.

Revised Framework for recruitment of international Consultants and Subscribers to Personal Service Agreements

24. Policies and procedures on the servicing of non-staff human resources (NSHR), namely consultants and subscribers under personal service agreements, were revised and amended Manual Sections along with comprehensive guidelines were issued at the end of 2013. The revised provisions and guidelines cover all aspects of NSHR, including needs identification and assignment creation, selection, remuneration and evaluation upon completion of assignment. NSHR represent a large proportion of FAO's workforce and this initiative provides a more consistent and transparent approach in the use and servicing of these employees across the Organization. The framework has been introduced for a trial period of one year, after which it will be reviewed based on feedback from internal stakeholders..

Streamlining and Increased Efficiency

(i) HR Servicing - Standard Operating Procedures

25. In the last quarter of 2013, a project was conducted to establish Standard Operating Procedures for those services delivered by the SSC offices in three locations Budapest, Santiago and Bangkok. Several workshops were held involving key HR staff from the Regional offices to review existing processes and opportunities for improvement and streamlining. The outcome was that 123 procedures (standardized across regions) have been defined and documented, and are now available on-line to staff working in the SSC offices globally to be used both for reference and as training material for newcomers. Of the 195 opportunities for improvement identified, all are in the process of being implemented .

26. The initiative is being pursued and will be extended in 2014 to cover other key areas of human resources operations such as recruitment and performance management. Some benefits of this project are more consistent and transparent human resources processes and facilitating the induction and rotation of staff.

(ii) Payroll and Social Security Benefits Servicing

27. Since November 2012, all NSHR are paid automatically through the payroll subject to an on-line certification, in lieu of the previous procedures requiring manual processing of payments for each individual. This change has generated significant improvements in terms of accuracy in payments as well as the correct recording of HR and financial data.

28. GRMS is closed for processing to users during the payroll run to avoid errors in final pay statuses. After careful analysis and optimization of all the processes involved, the length of the freeze due to the payroll run has been reduced from seven to three days, thereby increasing the productivity and efficiency of HR servicing.

29. OHR has successfully completed a project to automatically provide GRMS pension related HR and financial data to a new system being released by UNJSPF. This automatic linkage will enhance the quality and timeliness of information available to participants and accelerate the processing of pension benefits. FAO is the first Organization in the UN-system to implement this new interface.

30. OHR, in close collaboration with the Medical Unit and CIO, is pursuing the migration of the information system used to record medical and social security data of FAO, WFP and IFAD staff and retirees. This project will provide a series of automated tools including “self-service” facilities for participants to file electronically Service Incurred claims. This will reduce the number of manual transactions and accelerate settlement of claims.

ERP- HR data quality

31. Initiatives are pursued to extend access to human resources data to organizational stakeholders across Departments, Regional and Decentralized Offices. The data on FAO’s workforce is now more complete, due to the global deployment of GRMS concluded in June 2013 and efforts continue to improve the quality and reliability of the data. An executive HR dashboard is being piloted and will be made available to senior management in the second quarter of 2014. This will enable departments and regional offices to better plan and monitor their HR needs. In addition, a set of standard HR reports is being defined and these will be made available to staff working in HR across regions and to Managers and Department heads to facilitate their analysis of the workforce and future needs (e.g. succession planning, gender/geographic distribution etc.).

Medical Insurance Coverage

32. OHR is actively partnering with other Rome-based agencies to review the current schemes and related contracts for provision of medical and non-medical insurance services with the goal of releasing a multiple tender for these services as soon as possible. This has the potential to contain the costs of insurance for a number of medical and non-medical insurance services through economies of

scale and streamlined provider management as well as to show our new role as business partner for the organization.

33. The Social Security Group is participating in the review and design of processes to address the management of some additional 3,400 WFP local staff, and potentially 5,000 WFP consultants, currently managed by UNDP to be transferred under the FAO/WFP Staff Pension Committee umbrella. This move could contain the costs for a number of pension/medical and non-medical services through economies of scale.

Regional Updates on Human Resources

34. Our new mobility policy sets a base for a very intense and close cooperation between HQ and regions. To make this approach operational the Mobility Staffing Committee meets on a quarterly basis and consists of representatives from all our FAO regions. Regions will be very closely involved in all staffing decisions at an early time and are closely involved in developing and setting up a yearly mobility plan in line with their yearly HR planning exercise.

35. One of our further initiatives at HR of having a closer cooperation between HQ and regions and early involvement of regional expertise was to integrate the knowledge and processes from our DOs into our new Standard Operating Procedures where we agreed and documented the SSC HR-related, RAP and RLC processes and where we identified a number of opportunities for process-improvement in regions and at HQ.

36. Not only at this occasion we proceeded with a closer involvement of our regions – but as well on a number of other HR related topics we fostered decentralization and knowledge transfer:

- competency management by close cooperation with regional focus groups
- Generic job Profiles
- Learning @FAO and all the opportunities deriving from widened online learning approach offering the ability to boost knowledge at any remote place in the world.

37. At its 151st Session in November 2013, Committee Members requested regional updates on human resources for which detailed data is provided in the HR data pack. Special initiatives in the area of recruitment are also being launched to address the issue of geographical and regional representation, some of which are described below.

38. OHR is implementing several outreach activities and will carry out targeted recruitment campaigns, taking into account the operational requirements of the Organization and the need to attract qualified and skilled candidates from all regions, in particular from non- and under-represented countries. For example, OHR has purchased subscriptions to LinkedIn, Development aid and Devex to widely distribute vacancies as well as to have access to available databases of qualified professionals. As evidenced with the recent JP recruitment drive for the third cohort, the advertisement of the posts on LinkedIn combined with a proactive outreach to suitable applicants from non- and underrepresented countries, generated a 350% increase in the number of applications in comparison to the two previous cohorts of JPPs.

39. OHR is also analysing user profiles of the FAO employment site to understand who is applying and what can be done to increase our audience in non- and under-represented countries. Research will be undertaken to have a better insight of the national labour markets, potential competing employers in the country (e.g. NGOs), the tertiary educational institutions and areas of specialization in the country that the Organization could target. In addition, regular meetings with the HR Officers in the regional offices will be arranged to understand the labour markets trends and effective sourcing strategies from the regions.

ICSC Review of United Nations Common System Compensation Package/United Nations General Assembly decisions

40. It will be recalled that at its 38th Session the Conference recognized the importance of efforts to reduce increases in staff costs of the Organization, that most of FAO staff benefits and entitlements were determined under the United Nations Common System and were approved by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and/or the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The Conference appealed to the ICSC and the General Assembly, and likewise urged the Director-General to make a similar appeal, to consider the need for greater vigilance with regard to increases in staff costs across the Common System.

41. The Director-General then wrote to the Chairman of the ICSC and the Secretary-General in follow up to the Conference conclusion.

42. The comprehensive review of the UN common system package is on-going (ref. FC 151/12 paragraphs 19 to 32). The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) welcomed the review and its stated objectives and requested that all elements of the compensation package, monetary and non-monetary, be included in the review. The UNGA also requested that the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) not increase any of the allowances under its purview until the comprehensive review of the compensation package is completed and submitted to the General Assembly for review. The UNGA also welcomed the decision of the ICSC not to increase the post adjustment in New York in 2014 in view of the elevated level of the margin, that is the relationship between the net remuneration of the United Nations staff in the Professional and higher level categories in New York (i.e. base city for the UN post adjustment system) and that of the comparator civil service employees in Washington D.C. (ref. UNGA Resolution A/RES/68/253 of 27 December 2013). In accordance with article 54 (b) of the Regulations of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund, the scale of pensionable remuneration for the Professional staff will remain unchanged due to the freeze on the net remuneration for New York.

43. The impact of the above measures are estimated potential savings of USD 1.4 million over the 2014-15 biennium (Regular Programme) due to the cancellation of budgeted increases for pensionable remuneration effective 1 August 2014 (USD 1.1 million) and dependency allowance effective 1 January 2015 (USD 0.3 million) both for staff in the professional and higher categories.

44. In addition to the above, a 3 percent increase (USD 0.4 million) has been budgeted for the Education Grant, effective 2015, which may also not be implemented in the course of the biennium.

45. Other potential effects resulting from the freeze of the Post Adjustment of New York remain to be determined. In order to maintain purchasing power parity of salaries of UN common system professional staff worldwide, the Post Adjustment Indices (PAIs) of all duty stations are being scaled back by the same extent as New York (1.96%).

46. A detailed report on the above items and on the progress made on the ICSC comprehensive review will be provided at the 155th Session of the Finance Committee.

Redeployment Process

47. Redeployment task forces were established to address the impact of post abolitions identified as part of the savings requested by the 38th Session of the FAO Conference in June 2013.

48. The General Service redeployment exercise finished in October 2013 with all cases being re-assigned internally or leaving on agreed separation. The professional redeployment exercise concluded in March 2014 with all but a few cases concerned resolved either by mutually agreed separation or reassignment.

49. While the redeployment exercises were concluded, it is clear that the processes absorbed significant time and resources, and there is a need to reduce the related cost to the Organization in addition to that of the separations and reassignments themselves. A review is underway to

draw lessons from this exercise so that that processes can be more efficient and cost-effective in the future, in particular looking at the role of the task forces, staff representative bodies and management.