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COUNCIL

Hundred and Sixty-third Session

Rome, 2-6 December 2019

Report of the Joint Meeting of the 127th Session of the Programme Committee and 178th Session of the Finance Committee (4 November 2019)

Executive Summary

The Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees brings to the attention of the Council its findings and recommendations on:

- a) Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-21 (paragraph 6)
- b) Annual Report on Corporate Policy, Processes and Measures on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Authority Abuse (paragraph 7)
- c) Proposal for the use of unspent balances of biennial appropriations (paragraphs 8-12)
- d) Progress Report on Rome-based Agencies collaboration (paragraph 13)
- e) Hand-in-Hand Initiative (paragraph 14)

Suggested action by the Council

The Council is requested to endorse the findings and recommendations of the Joint Meeting.

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**REPORT OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE
HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE
PROGRAMME COMMITTEE AND HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-EIGHTH
SESSION OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Rome, 4 November 2019

INTRODUCTION

1. The Joint Meeting submitted its Report to the Council.
2. In addition to the Chairperson, His Excellency Johannes Petrus Hoogeveen (Netherlands), and Ms Imelda Smolcic Nijers (Uruguay), Chairperson of the Finance Committee, the following representatives of Members were present:

Mr Guillermo Valentín Rodolico (Argentina) ¹	Mr Toru Hisazome (Japan)
Ms Lynda Hayden (Australia)	H.E. Fayez Khouri (Jordan)
Mr Manash Mitra (Bangladesh)	Mr Muhammad Rudy Khairudin Mohd Nor (Malaysia)
Mr Rodrigo Estrela de Carvalho (Brazil)	Ms Traoré Halimatou Kone (Mali)
Ms Jennifer Fellows (Canada)	Mr Benito Santiago Jiménez Sauma (Mexico)
Ms Tamara Villanueva (Chile)	Mr Donald G. Syme (New Zealand)
Mr NI Hongxing (China)	Ms Tahirou Rahila Rabiou (Niger)
Mr Haitham Abdelhady Elsayed Elshahat (Egypt)	Mr Vladimir V. Kuznetsov (Russian Federation)
H.E. Zenebu Tadesse Woldetsadik (Ethiopia) ²	Mr Sid Ahmed M. Alamain Hamid Alamain (Sudan)
H.E. Delphine Borione (France)	H.E. Marie-Therese Sarch (United Kingdom)
Mr Heiner Thofern (Germany)	Ms Emily Katkar (United States of America)
H.E. Mohammad Hossein Emadi (Islamic Republic of Iran)	Mr Kayoya Masuhwa (Zambia)

Item 1: Adoption of the Provisional Agenda³

3. The Joint Meeting welcomed the Director-General's first statement and appreciated his comprehensive, informative and encouraging presentation.
4. The Joint Meeting welcomed with appreciation the presentation of his proposals, activities and initiatives and highlighted, besides the issues which are reflected in this Report, the following elements: (i) improving transparency, internal governance including the delegation of authority, and strengthening oversight and accountability; (ii) policies and actions to boost staff morale, and fully supported his recognition of staff as the main asset of the Organization; (iii) emphasis on innovation, including digitalization, as well as sustainable agriculture and biodiversity; (iv) priority given to aquaculture, fisheries and oceans; (v) the Organization's zero tolerance policy regarding harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of power.
5. The Joint Meeting adopted its agenda, as amended. The agenda is given in *Appendix A* to this report.

¹ Mr Guillermo Valentín Rodolico has been designated to replace Her Excellency María Cristina Boldorini as representative of Argentina for the 127th Session of the Programme Committee

² Mr Addisu Melkamu Kebede has been designated to replace Her Excellency Zenebu Tadesse Woldetsadik for part of the 178th Session of the Finance Committee

³ PC 127/1; PC127/INF/1

Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-21⁴

6. The Joint Meeting:
- a) took note that the guidance and decisions of the Conference have been implemented;
 - b) appreciated the initial adjustments proposed by the Director-General;
 - c) expressed satisfaction that the proposed adjustments would be managed within the overall approved budget level of USD 1,005.6 million through cost savings and efficiencies without negatively impacting the delivery of the agreed programme of work;
 - d) welcomed the additional resources allocated to FAO's work on the IPPC and on the Joint FAO/WHO food safety scientific advice programme, and to mainstreaming biodiversity;
 - e) supported the revised distribution of the net appropriation by budgetary chapter as reflected in Table 3;
 - f) noted the updated organizational structure (Annex 1) and the revised budgeted post establishment (Web Annex 5);
 - g) appreciated the stronger focus on scientific and evidence-based approaches;
 - h) highlighted the need for innovation and appreciated in principle the establishment of an Office for Innovation and the position of a Chief Scientist, and noted that more detailed information is needed about the concept behind the Office, including the terms of its mandate, the role and mechanism of the Office, and the terms of reference;
 - i) recalled para. 70.k) of the Report of the 41st Conference, emphasising the need to take into account priorities for all countries, including middle-income countries and upper-middle income countries;
 - j) appreciated in principle the establishment of an Office for SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs, and requested further clarification about its role within the Organization, its geographical scope, the terms of its mandate, the role and mechanism of the Office and the terms of reference, and its relationship with the Hand-in-Hand Initiative;
 - k) appreciated the establishment of the Women's Committee and Youth Committee, underlined the need to avoid duplication of work, and stressed that these Committees have no programmatic responsibilities;
 - l) noted the need for further clarification for the Biodiversity Cluster, especially on its role and function, its position within the Organization and its staffing;
 - m) noted the additional resources for the Office of the Inspector General, but raised concerns that the increase is not sufficient to cover the increasing workload of the Office;
 - n) took note of the updated estimates for extrabudgetary resources (Table 4) and encouraged Members to provide voluntary contributions to facilitate achievement of the Strategic Objectives and implementation of the integrated Programme of Work;
 - o) acknowledged that the governing bodies would have the opportunity to consider a broader review and adjustment to the implementation of the PWB during 2020, including at the 164th session of the Council (June 2020).

⁴ CL 163/3 and Web Annexes 2 to 7

Annual Report on Corporate Policy, Processes and Measures on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Authority Abuse⁵

7. The Joint Meeting:
- a) welcomed the progress made in alignment of FAO's activities in these matters with UN system-wide initiatives, including participation in the UNSG's quarterly reporting mechanism, and the clear message from the top on zero tolerance for all types of harassment;
 - b) commended the two separate Action Plans established, one on prevention of sexual harassment and one on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and emphasized the importance of monitoring implementation of the Action Plans, and looked forward to further updates and results of the training;
 - c) recommended use of harmonized and consistent terminology, including across Rome-based agencies, and in particular on definitions of abuse;
 - d) welcomed the revised Whistleblower Protection Policy, and noted the importance of more confidence in reporting, recalling the low response rate to the previous survey;
 - e) encouraged FAO to provide reporting at the UN system level through the established processes and at an agency level through FAO's website;
 - f) requested that a new stronger key performance indicator 10.3.E be proposed to the May 2020 session of the Finance Committee;
 - g) welcomed the management's agreement that the staff satisfaction survey, including harassment, sexual harassment and authority abuse, be performed during 2019, taking in consideration experience and lessons learned from processes taken place *inter alia* at WFP;
 - h) requested that the staff representative bodies be engaged in the preparation of the staff satisfaction survey;
 - i) encouraged continued targeted information sessions and mandatory e-learning supplemented by the communication campaign, as well as awareness-raising sessions being rolled out to the focal points in the decentralized offices;
 - j) noted the updated information provided on the status of recruitment for the positions of Ethics Officer and Ombudsperson.

Proposal for the use of unspent balances of biennial appropriations⁶

8. The Joint Meeting recalled the Conference "*recalled Council's request for a proposal to be presented on the systematic use of unspent balances of biennial appropriations, following review by the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM) and the Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees (CL 158/REP, para 10c), and requested that such a proposal be presented to their next Sessions in October-December 2019*"⁷.

9. The Joint Meeting recalled Financial Regulation 4.2 which states that "*Except as provided for in Financial Regulation 4.3 relating to the Technical Cooperation Programme, appropriations shall be available for obligations during the financial period to which they relate and unobligated appropriations at the close of the financial period shall be cancelled.*"

10. The Joint Meeting noted with concern that FAO has for more than 12 years been presented with the practice of carrying forward unspent balances of biennial appropriations, which is not in line with Financial Regulation 4.2 and which make the exception becoming the "rule."

⁵ CL 163/12

⁶ JM 2019.2/2

⁷ C 2019/REP paragraph 73.a)

11. The Joint Meeting noted the recommendations of the CCLM.⁸
12. The Joint Meeting:
 - a) while noting long-standing practice of the Conference in carrying forward unspent balances of biennial appropriations, observed that the establishment of a permanent procedure to carry over unspent balances is inconsistent with Financial Regulation 4.2;
 - b) recommended that the Council should have a more fundamental discussion about the compliance with Financial Regulation 4.2 in relation to the current practice prior to the implementation of the proposal, taking into account in particular the need to ensure transparent and proper budgetary processes and procedures.

Progress Report on Rome-based Agencies collaboration⁹

13. The Joint Meeting:
 - a) noted the information provided in the document JM2019.2/3 and progress made on Rome-based Agencies collaboration;
 - b) noted with concern that the decision of the Council in December 2018 and the guidance from the Joint Meetings, were not followed and requested a more strategic and structured approach to planning and reporting on RBA collaboration;
 - c) recommended that future reports focus on strategic issues and lessons learned, challenges faced, impacts concrete achievements and financial benefits under RBA collaboration, especially at country level;
 - d) appreciated the continued strong commitment of FAO, IFAD and WFP to strengthen the partnerships and collaboration focusing on the synergies and complementarities of RBA and asked for more visibility on concrete achievements especially at country level;
 - e) looked forward to further discussion within the broader UN Development System reform and the RBAs to directly reflect the developments, and for this to be a standing item of the informal RBA Governing Bodies meetings;
 - f) supported the continued RBA efforts in coordinated actions as the lead group of agencies within the UNDS to deliver SDG2, and in coordinated response within the ongoing UN reform process;
 - g) requested better communication to Members on joint activities and events both at the international and national levels;
 - h) welcomed the joint country strategies pilot countries and looked forward to reporting on these pilots and more countries following suit, and noted Management's information that there were 34 new UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) in preparation for 2020;
 - i) requested FAO together with WFP and IFAD to assess the feasibility of integrating administrative functions and greater collaboration in some oversight functions.
 - j) appreciated the efforts of the RBAs in preparing for the World Food System Summit under the direct leadership of the UN Secretary-General, and emphasized the need for Members to be fully involved.

⁸ CL 163/2

⁹ JM 2019.2/3 and Web Annex 4

Item 6: Any Other Business – Hand-in-Hand Initiative

14. The Joint Meeting welcomed in principle the Hand-in-Hand Initiative as a tool to accelerate the realization of SDGs 1 and 2 in countries that need it the most, including LLDCs, SIDS, LDCs and countries in a state of food crisis. The Joint Meeting:

- a) welcomed the presentation provided on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative;
- b) highlighted the need for regular briefings and written information on the Initiative and progress made;
- c) underlined that the Initiative should not create new obligations, bureaucracy or duplication, and stressed the need to maintain a focus on synergies;
- d) highlighted that the Initiative should focus on results at country level, ownership by countries, the poorest countries, as well as data and mapping;
- e) requested further information about programmatic and budgetary consequences, relationship with the UN development system (UNDS) reform, coordination mechanisms, and stressed the need for further information before an informed decision can be made;
- f) requested more detailed information about the functioning of the matching mechanism; its positioning within the Organization; the involvement of the membership; the involvement of the private sector; and the involvement of other UN organizations;
- g) looked forward to receiving a document setting out details of the initiative, its intended scope and outreach before the 163rd session of the Council.

Appendix A – Adopted Agenda of the Joint Meeting

1. Adoption of the Agenda *JM 2019.2/1*
2. Adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2020-21 *CL 163/3*
3. Annual Report on Corporate Policy, Processes and Measures on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Authority Abuse, including results of staff satisfaction survey *CL 163/12*
4. Proposal for the use of unspent balances of biennial appropriations *JM 2019.2/2*
[cf. CCLM 109/3]
5. Progress Report on Rome-based Agencies collaboration *JM 2019.2/3*
6. Any other business – Hand-in-Hand Initiative