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# FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

## Thirty-second Session

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## Decentralized Offices Network

### Executive Summary

FAO's Decentralized Offices strategic positioning has been significantly affected by a paradigm shift in the global development system and changing external landscape. FAO is actively contributing to the implementation of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the UN Development System (UNDS) repositioning, with an overall objective to reinforce collaborative efforts and work in greater synergy between UN partners and especially with the Rome-based Agencies (RBAs), towards the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

FAO's immediate priority in the course of 2020 and beyond would be to revamp its Decentralized Offices business model to pursue a programmatic approach and contribute more strategically to the UN system collective response to the aspirations of the countries' 2030 Agenda towards the attainment of the SDGs. In this context, FAO's contribution to the collaborative UN development effort will focus on achieving food security, nutrition and food and agricultural systems transformation.

The upcoming UN Decade on SDG acceleration will be a critical milestone for FAO's decentralized network to support national governments across various SDGs, focusing particularly on accelerating agricultural and rural transformation to eradicate poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2), in line with the newly launched flagship Hand-in-Hand Initiative.

Following the subsidiarity principle, FAO aims to further increase the autonomy of its Decentralized Offices at regional, subregional and country level for decision-making over resources, staff, policies and regulations which were previously centralized, in order to shift the Organization from a centre-out approach to one driven by demands at country and regional level. Efforts have already been made to progressively increase the flexibility afforded to Decentralized Offices to manage available budgeted resources. Furthermore, this approach was underpinned by greater delegation of authority to Decentralized Offices in various fields, including procurement and human resources, with the overall objective to ensure effective, agile and result-oriented delivery of FAO's programme of work on the ground.

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In parallel, in line with recommendations from oversight bodies, FAO has been taking consistent internal measures to strengthen oversight, transparency and integrity in Decentralized Offices. A robust internal control and risk management system has been put in place, to ensure adequate accountability measures and increased responsibility of managers in Decentralized Offices. This shift will continue by enhancing monitoring and evaluation functions in the field, aiming to increase Decentralized Offices' capacities, efficiency and responsiveness to member countries' needs.

#### **Suggested action by the Regional Conference**

- Support FAO Management's efforts towards increasing delegations of authority and decentralizing decision-making in administrative and programmatic areas, including human resources and procurement, aiming to improve overall delivery of the strategic programmes and respond to the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda.
- Request FAO to further pursue the adjustment of its Decentralized Offices business models, in particular in light of the UNDS repositioning, in order to ensure greater flexibility and efficiency in the use of the Organization's existing limited financial and human resources, aiming to respond to the member countries' emerging needs and priorities under FAO's Strategic Objectives and in line with the SDGs with special attention to addressing hunger and poverty in the most needy and vulnerable countries, prioritized by the Hand-in-Hand Initiative.
- Request FAO to continue its efforts to strengthen its technical capacities and policy integration at regional and subregional levels, to ensure FAO leadership in the region across relevant SDGs, including those under FAO's custodianship, and to contribute effectively to the new UN Cooperation Frameworks and common country analysis.
- Request FAO to shift towards a full programmatic approach at decentralized level to better demonstrate its valuable contributions to the SDG achievements in line with recommendations of the evaluation of FAO's Strategic Results Framework.
- Support FAO's continued engagement in the implementation of the UNDS repositioning at regional and country levels, and provide guidance on FAO's strategic direction with regard to its value proposition in the region.
- Request FAO to evaluate, identify and seize emerging opportunities arising from UNDS repositioning at country and regional levels, building on lessons learned and successful experiences in collaboration with other partners, especially in the RBA environment.
- Support the idea of establishing an issues-based coalition on food systems and nutrition for Europe and Central Asia region.

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## I. Setting the scene: FAO's decentralization policies and external drivers

1. FAO's Decentralized Offices strategic positioning has been significantly affected by a paradigm shift in the global development system and changing external landscape. The 2030 Agenda and related paradigm shift in the development system, requires FAO to coordinate its contributions in a multisectoral context towards the achievement of the SDGs at the national level.
2. FAO is actively contributing to the implementation of the General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the UNDS repositioning, with an overall objective to reinforce collaborative efforts and work in a synergetic manner with other UN partners and especially with the RBAs. The ambitious UNDS repositioning process has placed a strong emphasis on UN Agencies engaging in partnerships and joint planning and programming, resource mobilization and common business operations at decentralized levels, and envisages a restructuring of UN regional assets.
3. FAO is engaged in the development and roll-out of the RBA Action Plan for 2019-2020, designed to operationalize the tripartite Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2018. The progress in the RBA collaboration at decentralized level, including on joint advocacy, analysis and planning is an important contribution to the UNDS repositioning implementation.
4. Growing decentralization of resource and investment mobilization efforts within the emerging development landscape is another new dimension, requiring the development of a new business model for FAO's Decentralized Offices, including a greater focus on continuing to leverage investments in support of national goals.
5. Increasing importance of the regional and subregional dimension of development cooperation requires strengthened partnerships, high-level policy capacities and technical knowledge to develop region-specific solutions and to address challenges of a transboundary nature.
6. Evolving country contexts, (with more countries graduating into the middle-income and high-income economic categories) and hence changing national needs and priorities, compounded with ongoing transformations in countries' food and agricultural systems, is an important driver for country office transformation. Increasing influence of regional and subregional intergovernmental and economic integration organizations, is a new reality impacting country-level policies and donors' agendas as well as FAO's positioning at decentralized level.
7. Last, but not least, major global challenges and policies affecting FAO's work in regions and countries, including *inter alia* the UN Decade of Action on the SDGs, UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025); the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2016), and the Global Compact on Migration (2018), and the future outcomes of the forthcoming UN Food Systems Summit, need to be taken into due consideration in Decentralized Offices' strategic planning and programming.

## II. Common achievements among the five regions

8. In 2018-2019, FAO continued to invest in strengthening its Decentralized Offices network and its capacities across the regions to increase the impact of its work at the country level, supporting member countries in their efforts to attain the SDGs. FAO has been pursuing a twofold strategy that consisted of strengthening FAO's collaborative efforts, capacities and leadership at country and regional level, on the one hand, and improving internal performance, decision-making systems and delivery services to ensure more integrity and transparency and to be fit for purpose for the 2030 Agenda, on the other hand.

## *Strengthening the capacities, leadership and partnerships at Decentralized Offices*

### Strengthening capacities:

9. Pursuant to the guidance provided by the FAO Council at its 163rd session (2-6 December 2019), FAO will continue efforts to strengthen the work of Decentralized Offices without negatively impacting the technical capacity at headquarters. This process was launched in the previous biennium, to implement the guidance provided by the Regional Conferences in 2018 concerning the need for increased efficiency, flexibility and capacity of Decentralized Offices, and prioritized and tailored support to meet countries' specific needs. In particular, FAO started the transformation of country office business models, aiming to provide much needed flexibility for resource allocation at the country level to address emerging needs, including larger allocations to the most vulnerable countries.

10. These efforts will be further enhanced in 2020 and beyond to ensure that FAO's Decentralized Offices are adequately equipped to offer high-level technical and programming expertise and continue to adapt their respective skillsets to evolving priorities and a changing external environment. In an ever more competitive environment in the field, thinly resourced country offices would require greater capacity and backstopping support for joint planning, programming and resource mobilization as well as partnerships in the framework of a reinvigorated UN Resident Coordinators (RC) system. Financial and human resources are provided 'on-demand' to the roll-out countries starting the new UN Cooperation Framework cycle. This support includes skilled 'FAO Surge Capacity Teams' from different levels and areas of expertise of the Organization to be timely involved, and deployed as required, during the critical steps of the preparation of the UN Common Country Analyses (CCAs) and the entire visioning exercise, from which FAO's Country Programming Framework (CPF) will be derived. The adjustment of staff profiles will be undertaken, including a skill mix exercise and analysis of gaps in terms of profiles.

11. Pursuant to the recommendations from the Internal Review of FAO Regional Structures (2019), opportunities will be explored to focus thematically the multidisciplinary teams in the subregional and regional offices to provide integrated solutions and ensure better access of countries to FAO's technical expertise, knowledge and policy support in a complementary way to the overall review of the UN regional architecture, that is proposing the establishment of issues-based coalitions. The innovative business model of Partnership and Liaison Offices (PLOs) will be further explored and expanded to interested upper and lower middle-income countries, with stronger emphasis on their potential role as centres of excellence, including through South-South and Triangular cooperation.

### Strengthening FAO's leadership in UN country teams:

12. As evidenced by initial lessons learned from the implementation of the UNDS repositioning in the roll-out countries<sup>1</sup>, in order to harvest the potential of this renewed UN partnership, FAO country offices need to demonstrate strong leadership capacity within the UN country teams. In particular, the new reinvigorated RC system has provided an opportunity for FAO country representatives to leverage political support from the independent and impartial RC system for the sustainable food systems, agriculture, nutrition and food security (68 percent of FAO Representatives [FAORs] consider the new leadership of the RC as being independent and impartial with regard to their interaction with UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes<sup>2</sup>).

13. Since the launch of the UNDS repositioning on 1 January 2019, appropriate actions have been taken and guidance designed and provided to Decentralized Offices to ensure FAO's leadership role in the process. FAOR profiles (job description) were adjusted with a strong focus on Sustainable Development, especially on agriculture and food systems transformation. From 2020, FAORs are accountable for and will report to the RC on joint development results (modifications were introduced in the performance evaluation tool, PEMS). In a more strategic manner, FAO is consolidating a global

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<sup>1</sup> Results received from FAO's Internal Survey on the UNDS repositioning held in October-November 2019 with participation of all country offices

<sup>2</sup> Same as previous

knowledge management function to support country-level interventions through targeted collection, analysis and dissemination of corporate data and statistics on measurable indicators. Special training tools are being designed to support FAORs to implement UNDS repositioning. FAO has been further proactively engaged in leading more systematically the work of various thematic results groups and other mechanisms within UN country teams.

14. Furthermore, FAO has substantially revised its own CPF Guidelines in order for the planning and programming instrument at country level to be fully derived from the UN Cooperation Framework, as required by UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) Guidelines.

15. FAO is also part of the design of country-level UN Business Operations Strategies which have the overall objective to improve efficiency, accountability and cohesion through enhanced collaboration and greater synergies between agencies' administrative services and back offices with a view to achieving overall cost savings to be redeployed in support of development initiatives towards the attainment of the SDGs. These efforts complement the current vertical integration of administrative services already achieved through the FAO Shared Services Centre (SSC).

*Defining FAO's value proposition in the UN regional architecture:*

16. Throughout 2019, FAO has been fully engaged in the work of the interagency Internal Review Team (IRT) on the UN Regional Review, which resulted in the establishment of a single Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) for each region with the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) serving as a secretariat.

17. With regard to the RCP, the Organization is actively supporting the analytical and programmatic framework and advisory services, advocacy and convening functions especially for regional processes, strengthened coordination and support to UN RCs through policy work, analysis and information.

18. FAO is actively engaging in the formulation of the CCAs and is participating in the Mainstreaming, Acceleration and Policy Support (MAPS) missions in selected countries for further connection/integration with the new cycle of Cooperation Frameworks.

19. FAO Regional Offices are providing technical, policy and programming support to country offices in the various steps of the formulation of the Cooperation Frameworks.

20. Selected FAO Regional Officers have been appointed as members of the Regional Peer Support Groups (PSGs) coordinated by the Regional DCO Offices, tasked, *inter alia*, to peer-review the quality of the CCAs and other parts of the Cooperation Frameworks, ensuring that FAO's comparative advantage and contribution to relevant SDG targets are clearly recognized.

21. By pursuing cost-effective, demand-driven collaboration with UN partners at regional and subregional level, underpinned by a clear value proposition for the UN system as a whole as defined in the IRT, FAO will be better able to provide adequate responses to emerging cross-border or common development issues and priorities in the specific regional context. FAO has been supportive and committed to facilitate the proposed issues-based coalitions across various thematic clusters. FAO's regional efforts will also concentrate on improving accessibility to finance and investments through closer engagement with private sector and International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

*Prioritizing FAO's support to Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Land-locked Developing Countries (LLDCs):*

22. Responding to the request of the FAO Council at its 159th session (4-8 June 2018) and FAO membership's firm political commitment of reaching populations in far-off and isolated places in line with the principle of 'Leaving No One Behind', the FAO Director-General is placing strong emphasis on providing special targeted assistance to address the challenges of SIDS, LDCs and LLDCs. The newly established dedicated Office in FAO headquarters will coordinate and harmonize policy support to these countries, and the newly launched flagship Hand-in-Hand Initiative is serving as a platform for better facilitation and acceleration of FAO's contribution to countries in achieving SDGs 1 and 2.

Enhancing RBA collaboration:

23. The ongoing repositioning of the UNDS is playing a strong catalytic role in advancing RBA cooperation at country and regional level. In response to the recommendations approved by the FAO Council at its 160th session in December 2018, there is growing effort to make this collaboration more systematic, strategic and focusing on programmatic approaches. The RBAs are demonstrating active team engagement in this process in the field and are positioning themselves as “natural allies” thus advocating jointly for placing food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture high on the UN country agenda. RBAs are more closely engaged in designing joint programmes on food, nutrition and agriculture at country level as part of the UNSDCF, including piloting of joint country plans in selected countries (*Colombia, Indonesia and the Niger*).

***Improving internal performance and oversight, decision-making systems and delivery services:***

Decentralizing decision-making and delegation of authority:

24. Since the initial phases of decentralization, in response to decisions taken by member countries at the 163rd Session of the FAO Council and following the subsidiarity principle, the Organization has been taking continued measures to increasingly delegate authority to Decentralized Offices, especially on planning, programming and resource mobilization. Most recently, FAO has been sharpening its focus on ensuring meaningful delegation of authority in operational matters, especially on human resources management and procurement, as reaffirmed by the Internal Review of FAO’s Regional Structures (2019) and the Evaluation of FAO’s Strategic Results Framework (2019). These efforts will continue in 2020 and beyond, with an objective to speed up FAO’s delivery and avoid delays in project implementation, to meet the expectations of the 2030 Agenda and engage in joint programme implementation with other United Nations’ partners. Actions being implemented include the revision of the Non-Staff Human Resources (NSHR) policy, allowing increased decision-making authority from headquarters to the regional offices in various fields, including recruitment of non-staff resources and streamlining of various clearance procedures. The newly introduced revised procurement policy of FAO (Manual Section 502) allows increased delegation of authority for heads of Decentralized Offices, provided that local capacities are in place (i.e. training) and/or International Procurement Officers (IPOs) are available in the country or at (sub)regional level to support national and regional procurement actions.

Improving internal performance, control and risk management functions in the Decentralized Offices:

25. In the reporting period, FAO introduced strengthened internal controls, operational management (including fiduciary risk) and risk management functions in Decentralized Offices, as recognized by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) Assessment Report 2017-2018. The full-scale implementation of risk management function roll-out in the Decentralized Offices, including more integrated and streamlined systems for planning, monitoring and reporting on risks is underway and will be completed in the course of 2020. In parallel, to increase the local capacity, FAO launched new knowledge exchange and training programmes, including temporary geographic mobility placements for Assistant FAORs, group briefings for new FAORs and cross-regional Think Labs, enabling country offices to share experiences, good practices and solutions to common challenges across all five regions.

### III. Achievements and challenges in the region

26. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) and the FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia (SEC), with their multidisciplinary teams and in close collaboration with the headquarters technical divisions and the Strategic Programme management teams, provide technical assistance to 17 member countries.<sup>3</sup>

27. FAO's presence in these countries remains rather limited and would need further strengthening and consolidation. The 30th Session of the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) recommended upgrading the presence in Uzbekistan from multiple accreditation to fully-fledged representation on a cost-neutral basis. The Organization will continue endeavouring to identify resources to implement this action during the 2020-2021 biennium. Discussions have started with the Government of Turkmenistan for strengthening the programmatic activities and formalizing FAO's presence in the country.

28. Currently, the region has eight country offices. Three country offices in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey are headed by an international resident FAOR, while five country offices in Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Uzbekistan are covered under the multiple accreditation scheme headed by senior managers in the REU and SEC, respectively, with resident Assistant FAORs. In addition, FAO has Partnership and Liaison Offices in Azerbaijan (where the head of office is on post) and in Kazakhstan (where the post of head of office is currently vacant); these offices facilitate the development of robust partnership programmes with the host government and the establishment of technical hubs with key technical expertise and knowledge. Host country agreements are now covering FAO's presence with an official status in all countries except Kyrgyzstan, where negotiations have recently resumed with that country's government.

29. In seven member countries<sup>4</sup> of the region, FAO has no formal representation. The Regional Office in Budapest or the Subregional Office in Ankara manages the portfolio of programmes and projects in these countries, with the support of national project teams. In four of these countries, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina (currently vacant), Serbia and North Macedonia, FAO's presence is facilitated by the national correspondent scheme.

30. In the past two years, the operational capacities of existing country offices have been strengthened, thanks to the good prioritization of the regular programme and extrabudgetary resources. In particular, the offices in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan have dynamically developed their programmes. The offices are also making considerable efforts to fully master the modality of the new FAO Cost Recovery Policy. The number of personnel employed has increased, and the skills and competences have improved, in comparison with previous years.

31. However, in spite of the overall improved situation, it is worth mentioning that the staffing model of the country offices in the region, in both the representations with multiple accreditation and fully-fledged offices, needs better articulation between Regular Programme and extrabudgetary resources to ensure an efficient internal control system in the various areas of responsibility and proper segregating of duties. In the entire Europe and Central Asia region, country offices have as Regular Programme positions only Assistant FAOR (Programme) and a general service programme assistant position. Most of the offices have taken action to compensate this gap either with non-Programme of Work and Budget (non-PWB) or non-staff personnel, but this has certain risks in terms of institutional knowledge and continuity. A review of the structure of the country offices was undertaken in 2018 and this work needs to continue in view of the findings of the Internal Regional Review and the opportunities offered by the country level Business Operations Strategies (BOS 2.0).

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<sup>3</sup> Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

<sup>4</sup> Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.

## **IV. The way forward: challenges and opportunities:**

### *Global dimension:*

32. Given the increasing frequency and gravity of external challenges and drivers, FAO's Decentralized Offices positioning in the medium term will require systematic review and analysis and a higher level of flexibility and adaptation, to fully respond to the expectations of the Members.

33. In the 2020-2021 biennium, FAO needs to pursue the following objectives to address challenges and harness new opportunities:

#### **1. Shift towards a fully programmatic approach at decentralized level:**

34. By accelerating the shift towards a fully programmatic approach and by setting more tangible programmatic objectives at country and regional level, FAO will be able to leverage its global policy, regulatory, scientific and technical contribution in support of SDG attainment following the 2030 Agenda. This will also help FAO to influence the UN Cooperation Framework in the areas of its core mandate. This process will be assessed in the review of FAO's Strategic Framework, which will take place in 2020.

#### **2. Advance FAO's value proposition at regional level in the context of UNDS repositioning:**

35. By consolidating regionalized knowledge and technical capacity and engaging in the proposed "issues-based coalitions" which are networks of UN agencies' capacities across various thematic clusters, FAO will be able to lead the UN regional response to country needs in the areas of its core mandate and improve member countries' access to FAO's regional expertise. FAO's policy integration capacities and abilities at regional level, including through innovation and analysis would be key to succeed in this important and challenging dimension.

#### **3. Lead on food security, agriculture and nutrition at country level:**

36. By capitalizing on the redesigned UN Cooperation Frameworks to increase attention at national level to food security, agriculture and nutrition FAO will be able to influence the UN agenda at the country level, gearing towards a multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral approach. Another remaining challenge is the need to tighten the alignment of FAO's results framework to the SDG indicators and draw on monitoring and evaluation capacities to strengthen FAO's country-level monitoring and reporting tools.

#### **4. Promote inclusive partnerships at regional and country level:**

37. Promoting a strengthened and more results-oriented collaboration with other UN partners and especially the RBAs, based on synergies and complementarities, is a prerequisite to address the challenges ahead and achieve the aforementioned objectives. FAO will also sharpen its focus on partnering with the private sector and public and private investors and on promoting innovative partnerships. Similarly to the Civil Society Organizations regional coordination mechanism efforts should also be put in place to facilitate the establishment of a regional coordination mechanism for the private sector. The elaboration of a new vision for collaboration with the private sector, as requested by the FAO Council at its 163rd session in December 2019 (CL 163/REP paragraph 10.b) will have significant implications for shaping new partnerships at Decentralized Offices level.

## 5. Boost operational capacity:

38. As recommended by MOPAN (2017-18) and the Internal Review of FAO's Regional Structures (2019), in the 2020-2021 biennium FAO will continue to apply further action to boost operational efficiencies through the decentralization of key management and operational processes, increased delegations of authority, improved monitoring and evaluation and reporting capacities at the country level, with the objective of improving overall performance and programmatic delivery.

## 6. Promote innovation at decentralized levels:

39. In line with the vision of the Director-General, the Decentralized Offices network will be fully engaged in the FAO digitalization process and promotion of innovations in the field to accelerate progress in delivering the 2030 Agenda. The new corporate vision will be defined by a newly established Office for Innovation at headquarters, which will consolidate and strengthen FAO's innovative ethos, including innovation of mind-set, innovation of cooperation models, and innovation of application by digitalization. The Decentralized Offices network will be at the forefront of efforts to promote innovative methodologies, approaches and programmes that can be sustainably scaled up in cooperation with national governments, private sector, academia and civil society and the other UN partners and international stakeholders benefiting from the modalities of the Hand-in-Hand Initiative.<sup>5</sup> Taking into consideration that there is no global solution to some of the challenges that we are facing today, and there is no one size fits all, Decentralized Offices will play a valuable role in adapting innovative solutions and business models to the local context, and specific needs and demands of the countries.

### *Regional dimension:*

40. The global objectives identified to address challenges and harness new opportunities are fully valid and applicable in the region.

41. The rapidly changing and increasingly challenging global environment triggers FAO to shift towards more coherent, innovative and cost-effective business models, particularly in view of a wide diversity of Members in the region in terms of economic development and agricultural potential. This requires more flexibility in the use of budgeted resources, thereby allowing FAO to respond to country-specific and emerging needs and priorities, putting a special emphasis on LLDCs.

42. In the context of ongoing UNDS repositioning, FAO will adapt its decentralized network in the region to be well placed in offering integrated policy advice and technical knowledge to collectively support Members in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. FAO will be making continued efforts to strengthen collaboration with UN partners at regional and country level through scaling up joint activities, particularly in anchoring the Organization's policy work within the broader context of the SDGs.

43. With reference to the regional support work in the Europe and Central Asia region, the RCP already established six Issue-Based Coalitions (IBCs), on youth; social protection; health; gender; large movements of people, displacement and resilience; and SDG data and monitoring, and two more, on environment and migration, are under consideration. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia is currently part of the IBCs on social protection, gender, health and data/monitoring and also is ready to join on environment. The purpose of this coalition of partners of the UN system in the region is to act as a pan-European-enabling mechanism to facilitate and promote the implementation of the SDG targets by coordinating the activities of the relevant UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations and partners. Each IBC is chaired by one or two agencies responsible for the overall coordination of the activities.

44. The cross-cutting nature of food systems and nutrition and their relevance to the whole region may benefit from joint efforts through UN interagency partnership, including the World Health Organization, the World Food Programme and UNICEF, as well as strengthened cooperation with non-

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<sup>5</sup> See more details on the background document "FAO's Hand-in-Hand Initiative: a New Approach" (ERC/20/12). Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/nc347en/nc347en.pdf>

UN actors within the IBC. Given the suggestion to use the IBCs as the backbone for a new Regional Knowledge Management Hub, to be established based on recommendation 2 from the UN Secretary-General's Report A/74/73-E/2019/14, Members may take advantage through access to expertise on this important issue, supported by strengthened, multipartner-based solutions. Therefore, FAO is considering proposing the establishment of an issues-based coalition related to food systems and nutrition in the Europe and Central Asia region.

45. Particular attention will also be given to FAO's normative and standard-setting dimensions, deriving from the Organization's global mandate and commitments for FAO's work in Europe and Central Asia. In order to support countries in carrying forward this critical work and to prioritize these dimensions in relevant CPFs and Regional Initiatives, FAO needs to timely and strategically engage in the Cooperation Frameworks, otherwise, there is an increasing risk of further de-emphasis and devaluation by respective resource partners and government counterparts.

46. The specific support provided by the REU in the formulation of the Cooperation Framework<sup>6</sup>, from which FAO's CPF is derived, includes the establishment of a 'Surge Capacity Team' from different levels of the Organization working on the FAO pre-CCA, the CCA and the preparation of the UNSDCF itself to ensure that the FAO country, regional and normative issues are adequately reflected in the UNSDCF. It is therefore key that timely and systematic support is provided to the FAORs throughout the Cooperation Framework's formulation and implementation process, as indeed FAO's CPF is now tightly linked and duly grounded in the UN CCA and in the UNSDCF's visioning and prioritization.

47. Due to the small size of FAO representations in the region, the Regional Office (REU) and Subregional Office (SEC) deploy, upon request, experts to support country offices in relevant UNSDCF visioning and prioritization exercises to ensure that FAO's comparative advantage is reflected. At the regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group level, FAO is represented in the PSG that is involved in the quality reviews of the CCA and UNSDCF documents.

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<sup>6</sup> UNSDCF guidance: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/united-nations-sustainable-development-cooperation-framework-guidance>