



24 May 2012

Informal seminar for Permanent Representatives - Opening remarks

Ladies and gentlemen,

In keeping my promise of having regular informal sessions, I want to thank you for attending this second informal Seminar for Permanent Representatives.

We have three issues on our agenda today: the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the G8 and G20 meetings.

Regarding Rio+20, we must understand that sustainable development does not exist while there is social exclusion.

That is the **first key message** FAO is taking to the Rio+20: sustainable development cannot be realized unless hunger and malnutrition are eradicated.

Rio+20 is a golden opportunity to explore the convergence between the agendas of food security and sustainability.

Both require changes towards more sustainable production and consumption.

That is our second message.

Our third message is that the transition to a sustainable future also requires fundamental changes in the global governance of food and agriculture and an appropriate financing of the transition to a more sustainable production system.

Who pays this cost is an important question. In the past, the poorer have paid a greater share of transition costs and received a smaller share of benefits.



Ladies and gentlemen, also in the agenda for today's meeting is FAO's work related to the G8 and G20.

Regarding the G20, at the request of the Mexican Presidency we are contributing to the development of a Tropical Agriculture Platform and supporting the sustainable increase in smallholder production.

Regarding the G8, At its Summit a few days ago, the G8 leaders launched *the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition*, to boost the fight against hunger in Africa and involve the private sector.

This means that we should be inclusive and bring the debates, decisions and actions into multilateral forums. That is why we opened this opportunity to discuss these issues here today.

Ladies and gentlemen, tomorrow another informal briefing will be held to prepare for the Special session of the Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees.

It will discuss the process of changes we are undergoing to improve our performance, results and impact.

As I will not be able to be present tomorrow, I would like to take this opportunity to make a few comments on this matter.

This process, which I initiated immediately after taking up office, consists of two parts:

- A strategic thinking process to prioritize our work and to provide greater value-for-money, based on our comparative strengths;
- Institutional strengthening to improve the translation of FAO's normative and standard setting work into results from country to global levels.



We are well advanced in the strategic thinking process, which will help define the future strategic direction for the Organization, as presented in the Document CL 144/14.

This is a **four step process**.

First, we have identified major trends that are shaping our future, which include increasing food demand and food prices, growing competition for natural resources, climate change and increased vulnerability.

Second, based on these trends, we have identified seven challenges in areas such as food security, sustainable production and consumption, rural livelihoods, inclusive agricultural systems and resilience for rural populations.

The *third* step of this process are further discussions and refinements at Programme and Finance Committees, and then by the Council in June.

The global trends and seven global challenges have been considered with respect to FAO's basic attributes, core functions, and comparative advantages.

Accordingly, we propose five strategic objectives to focus our future work:

One, to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition;

Two, to increase production in agriculture, fisheries and forestry in an economic, social and environmentally sustainable manner;

Three, to improve the livelihood of rural populations, in particular women and youth, through enhanced employment opportunities and increased access to production resources;

Four, to enable more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems at local, national, regional and international levels;



Five, to increase the resilience of rural livelihoods to threats and crises.

Following the discussion at the Council, we will then develop action plans and programs in a strong results-based planning and management framework.

Finally, the *fourth* and last step of this process will be the development of results-based action plans and programs.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are also advancing on the strengthening of our capacity at decentralized locations.

We have identified savings that represent just 2 percent of the budgetary appropriation approved by the Conference in 2011. It's a very small amount, but that will significantly strengthen our work.

Among other things, we will use these funds to support decentralization and to support our work in a few new areas of focus and priorities that have emerged from the strategic planning exercise. That is why we are strengthening the Multidisciplinary Fund.

Tomorrow, you will receive a more detailed briefing by Dan Gustafson and Boyd Haight on these aspects and FAO's vision for transformational change.

My colleagues will take you through the details of the ideas and concrete measures contained in the documents on:

- the outline of the reviewed Strategic Framework,
- the structure and functioning of the decentralized offices,
- and on further adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget 2012-2013.

As today's session, tomorrow's meeting does not replace our formal Governing Bodies sessions. But they do give us an opportunity to informally discuss specific topics of our mutual interest.



Ladies and gentlemen, as I told the Council last December, and I quote from that statement:

“Rebuilding trust must be based on the recognition that we – the Member Countries and the Secretariat – have shared goals and complementary responsibilities, as clearly established in our Constitution. Trust requires that we work together with total transparency.”

Despite what our Constitution says, the boundaries that separate guidance from management are still tenuous in our day-to-day work.

Secretariat and Member countries must work together to rebuild these boundaries. It is necessary to do that to rebuild trust. I ask for your full support on this.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are other important issues of high priority that we have been working on - including culture change, accountability, performance evaluation, partnerships and gender - and which have received my attention and are at various stages of development. Not mentioning them in detail today, does not mean that they are less important. But time constraints force me to postpone the discussion on these issues to the near future.

Thank you.