



15 Juin 2012

***144th SESSION OF THE FAO COUNCIL
CLOSING STATEMENT OF THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF FAO***

Independent Chairperson of the Council, Mr. Luc Guyau,
His Excellency Ismat Abasov, Minister for Agriculture of Azerbaijan, Chairperson of the Regional Conference for Europe,
Distinguished Ministers,
Members of the Council,
Colleagues of FAO and UN agencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This has been a very fruitful week. I would like to thank all of you for the trust and support given to the proposals presented. This trust and support are the warrants of the joint actions we are engaging in to achieve our common goals.

Be assured that we have listened carefully to all of your comments and your guidance. We have noted them and will come back to you soon with the additional information requested.

At the opening session on Monday I told you that I believed we were succeeding in rebuilding trust. The results of this Council confirm that.

But I am not taking our advances for granted. They are part of a process that we are building brick by brick, in a frank and constructive manner, fulfilling the different and complementary mandates that the Secretariat and Members have for management and guidance.



I still think that we can and need to go further. But, without a doubt, there is a breath of fresh air in our relationship.

I feel there is a real engagement of countries and other partners in what is becoming a truly collective process to build a better Organization.

This Council session is also different and will go down in history as the one in which we saw the break of the divide between the South and the North, between the G-77 Plus China and the OECD countries.

As I have said before, achieving consensus is the best way to pave the way for moving forward faster. Let me repeat that, "I will not be able to do anything except what we can do together."

We now have a clear roadmap, and it's time to act.

I am optimistic. When I spoke to you last year, I presented to you a vision for FAO. Today, I can see that there is a common vision shared among us.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you know, it is in my intent to bring the Immediate Plan of Action, the IPA, to a satisfactory conclusion as soon as possible with most actions being completed by the end of this year.

But let me say that the IPA is the least common denominator of the Independent External Evaluation, the IEE, agreed within the context of the previous management.



Before we close the book on the ongoing FAO Reform, I would like to have the opportunity to revisit the IEE.

Let's make sure that there are no important issues raised by the IEE that have not been considered. I will present concrete proposals to the next Council meeting.

Let me say that any change brings uncertainty, especially changes that mean breaking with business as usual approaches and that mean adopting a new mindset.

But there is one certain thing about this process: change is absolutely necessary for FAO. Without change, FAO still risks becoming irrelevant as the IEE report already pointed out.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I want to acknowledge and thank the interventions that have been made this week pointing to the need for Members to refrain from trying to manage and, even worse, micromanage the Organization.

Despite the complementary responsibilities clearly established in our Constitution for Members and the Secretariat, in practice, all of us know that there is still a grey area between guidance and management.

It manifests itself in different ways, including in the unconditional defense that Members sometimes make of their national staff.

In the spirit of Article VIII of FAO's Constitution, we should only see International Civil Servants in the Organization.



As I already said before, all staff members deserve to be evaluated based on the merit of their performance, and not by their nationality, gender, religion, color or by the post they hold.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the Members and, especially the Independent Chairperson of the Council, for accepting that staff representatives be allowed to speak at this Session, despite the last minute request.

Management and staff are also in a process of rebuilding trust. This is also necessary to move forward faster.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me briefly explain the next steps for our work in the second semester of this year.

Regarding the Strategic Thinking Process, we will concentrate on the following actions:

- First, the Staff Working Groups will be developing the Strategic Objectives into concrete Plans of Action, taking into account the inputs received from the Membership, including your guidance of this week.
- The further elaboration of the Strategic Objectives will provide a clear description of the problem, identifying the priority areas on which to concentrate our work and the means needed for a more efficient FAO intervention;



- Second, the elaboration of the Plans of Action will build on three crosscutting issues: gender equity; science, technology and innovation improvement; and better governance;
- Third, we will consider the overall implications of having our work reorganized around a smaller number of crosscutting strategic objectives, within the context of a robust results-based framework, in the actual structure of the Organization. On July Twelfth (12th), we will host a meeting with nine UN agencies, five regional economic commissions and two regional agricultural bodies to discuss with our partners the implications of our Strategic Thinking Process and possible future areas for better cooperation.

We will also have formal consultations with the Committees on Fisheries, Forestry and World Food Security, during their meetings in the second semester.

And, of course, the revised Strategic Framework will be once again submitted to the Program and Finance Committees in November and to the Council in December.

In this regard, let me just refer to one question that has been raised several times this week, on how the Multidisciplinary Fund will work.

Let me start observing that, today, the existing Multidisciplinary and Innovation funds have a dispersion of resources into too many activities, decided in an ad hoc basis. A need to focus is obvious.

To enable coherence and consistency with corporate priorities and programmes, the use of the resources of both funds will be overseen by the Director-General based on proposals from OSP – our reinforced Office for Strategy, Planning and Resources Management that you have just approved.



Its main objective will be to fund crosscutting proposals essential for the implementation of the ongoing Medium Term Plan and improve the transition to the new strategic direction of the Organization.

In the second semester, we will also develop further institutional strengthening proposals for consideration by the Council.

This effort will take into consideration the recent Evaluation of “FAO’s role and work in food and agriculture policy”.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I promised at the Council last December, I have made all efforts to ensure that we could have a smooth transition. To do that, I have been working with the team put in place almost in its entirety by my predecessor.

When I addressed the Council last December I also said that: any new manager needs to have room to pick his own team, especially at higher-level positions. And that those changes should be seen as natural in all organizations, inside and outside the UN system.

Let me recall that I have already presented a set of procedures to assure an institutional transition in the future and restrict the authority of the Director-General in certain matters during this transitional period. And I am pleased that Members welcomed the draft Conference resolution presented and which you will have the opportunity to further discuss later this year.

I am willing to self-limit the authority of any Director-General, including my own, during the transition process because I think it is in the best interest of the Organization; and because it complements the democratic spirit that must prevail before and after any democratic electoral process.



I do not want any of my successors to face the embarrassing situation I had to face after my election and that I am still facing today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before I end, let me share with you some of the missions I have planned for these upcoming months.

I am flying tomorrow to Los Cabos, to attend the G20 Summit, at the kind invitation of its Mexican Presidency. This will be the first time that a FAO Director-General speaks to the G20 leaders, and it is also a first for the Rome-based Agencies.

In the spirit of our renewed partnership and commitment to working together, the message I will take to the G20 will not be only FAO's but a joint message with IFAD and WFP.

We are also taking this spirit of cooperation into Rio+20, where we will also present a joint statement. Strengthening partnerships to achieve our goal of a world without hunger is a cultural change in itself that needs to begin at home and in Rome, with our sister agencies.

It also needs to go beyond that if we really want to involve civil society and private sector in our day-to-day work.

From Rio, I will then travel to Panama, El Salvador and Honduras, where I will attend the Presidential Summit of Central America.

Between July and October, I have missions planned to South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Portugal, China, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea, Turkey and the United States, where I will also be attending the United Nations General Assembly.



A statement by FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, I want to thank you again for your full support and I look forward to seeing you again in the next Council session in December.

Thank you.