



26 April 2013

146th Session of the FAO Council

Closing Statement

Mr Luc Guyau, Independent Chairperson of the Council,

Members of the Council,

Permanent Representatives

Colleagues of UN agencies and FAO,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to start by thanking all of you for the spirit of dialogue that was present during your deliberations this week.

This is the result of the trust that has been rebuilt among FAO Members and the Secretariat and the result of the work we are doing together.

In this context, I want to thank you for approving the FAO Strategies for FAO Partnerships with Civil Society and Private Sector.

We have repeated many times that it is possible to end hunger if we work together. These strategies show that we are committed to working in partnership.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Your constructive comments and questions this week provide us with guidance we need to take the next steps.

We have listened carefully.

We have heard your support for the transformational change process.



We have heard your recognition of our efforts in delivering best value for money and to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy.

We have heard the ample consensus on the Reviewed Strategic Framework. This is a strong foundation on which to build our future work, that was made possible through the Strategic Thinking Process.

We have heard your discussions on the Medium Term Plan and Program of Work and Budget that I have presented.

We have heard you say that it is important to support this program of work, that translates into concrete proposals the Reviewed Strategic Framework that this Council session has endorsed for approval by the FAO Conference.

We have heard your support to our efforts to strengthen the organizational structure.

We welcome this support.

We have also heard the concerns you have expressed over specific points of the program of work and your requests for further information and clarifications.

We have heard your concerns about the implementation of the matrix approach. They are valid concerns. And they are also my concerns.

That is why I am personally leading this process and why I am chairing the Corporate Programme Monitoring Board, the CPMB, composed of DDGs, the ADGs at Headquarters and in the regions, Strategic Objective Coordinators and OSP.

This is where we will discuss the action plans and the implementation mechanisms.

Let me add that we are not losing time. In fact, this morning the CPMB had its second meeting.

In this framework, we are already testing this approach with the six pilot regional initiatives – one for each region and two in Africa.

It's a learning process and a necessary one. We need to break from the silo mentality that for too many years has been present in FAO.

We are committed to transforming FAO for the better. The new programmatic approach and new ways of working for the Organization are essential.

We also heard the debates regarding the budget level needed to implement the program of work. We welcome the establishment of the Friends of the Chair mechanism that will help the dialogue on the program of work and budget in the forthcoming months.



Ladies and gentlemen,

As I stressed in my opening remarks to Council, we need an additional 31.5 million dollars to deliver the program of work we are discussing. But we are not asking you for this full amount. We have already identified ways to absorb most of this increase.

What we do need is a very small increase of 10 million dollars, which represents a one percent real increase in the budget level.

It is a small increase to ask for, but one that has a high symbolic value of our commitment to the goals of the organization.

I want to recall that with the changes in the scale of contributions that will be adopted by Conference, 8 out of the 10 current major contributors to FAO's regular program budget will see a net reduction in their financial obligations to the Organization.

That means that many countries will be paying less, despite the requested increase.

I also want to recall what I said at the opening session of the Council on zero nominal growth.

Zero nominal growth is not really "growth", but quite the opposite: it means a real reduction of the budget because of the reduction in nominal purchasing power accumulated during the biennium.

Since 1994-1995, the FAO budget has lost 27% of its real value. This has a tremendous negative impact in the Organization.

In fact, it is as if we have forced an economic recession upon the organization.

The impacts of this forced recession are not only financial.

It has affected our capacity to assist countries in the areas of our mandate.

It has affected our capacity to deliver the public goods we are responsible for.

And it has forced us to look for voluntary contributions and work in areas which are not aligned to a coherent strategic direction.

In turn, this has been one of the reasons that have led us to spread our resources too thin and to lose our focus.

We are in the process of reversing this negative spiral. But if we take a step back now, we actually risk losing the gains we have achieved in the last 16 months.



I also want to point out that we have prepared this Program of Work and Budget in a truly results-based approach.

If we need to reduce the budget, there is a high possibility that we will have to close some of these posts before they are even filled.

But with the same transparency and the same frank dialogue we have had until now, I am confident that we will overcome the small differences that still exist with regards to the budget.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have listened carefully to your deliberations at Council this week. We have taken note of your comments and requests.

We have offered further clarifications during this session of the Council. We will respond to your requests in the next months until the Conference.

And, after the Program of Work and Budget is approved, we will still have six months for the final adjustments before beginning to implement the Program of Work and Budget on 1 January 2014.

On the road to the Conference we will support Members of FAO in the Friends of the Chair group. And we will continue to provide information and clarifications you need, in an open and transparent manner.

This is not only our duty as Secretariat, but it is also incumbent on the leadership role which you have entrusted me.

I am confident that we will find the consensus we need for the Conference.

The support you have expressed for the program of work and the emphasis that many countries have given to the need to protect the program of work is the baseline we should start from.

I thank all of you for the hard work done.