



Members' Update

# FAO renewal

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## **Members review progress on FAO's renewal**

A report analyzing progress over the past year in FAO's five-year programme of renewal and reform has been presented to Members.

The Conference Committee reviewed developments on numerous change projects being carried out under the Immediate Plan of Action. The plan aims to carry through recommendations from the Independent External Evaluation, which was commissioned by FAO Members and carried out in 2006-07.

The programme of work for 2010-11 contains 154 actions, with project leaders reporting 82 percent either already completed or on track.

The meeting recapped on how FAO renewal aims to transform the Organization into one that manages for results, supported by human resources reform, more efficient administrative services, and improvements to ensure "functioning as one" across departmental and geographic borders. All of this is being underpinned by changes in the corporate culture and by governing body reform.

"I am pleased that Members feel they have been fully informed of quantitative and qualitative progress in FAO renewal. This session provided us with an opportunity to describe the main achievements over the past year and to give a full account of the status of each and every IPA action endorsed by Members back in 2008," said Manoj Juneja, assistant director-general and spokesperson on FAO renewal.

"Members' satisfaction with our efforts is clearly important since, as we've stressed many times, this complex renewal would not be possible without the support and involvement of our member countries."

Here are some of the areas where progress was highlighted:

In **managing for results**, all units have finished their 2010-11 operational work plans and the monitoring and reporting framework has been completed. Progress was also made in developing the resource mobilization and management strategy, whereby assessed contributions are supplemented by increased voluntary contributions to support the strategic objectives.

To ensure better **“functioning as one”**, primary responsibility for supervising FAO representations (national offices) and technical officers in the regions was transferred from headquarters to the heads of the five regional offices. Meanwhile greater authority for procurement in emergencies was given to decentralized offices, supported by the training of hundreds of staff in offices worldwide. Local procurement officers were also recruited.

At the same time, a Common Procurement Team of staff from FAO, WFP and IFAD oversaw the issuing of 18 joint tenders with a total value of US\$23 million, resulting in significant savings to all three Organizations.

**Reform of administrative and management systems** has seen the completion of the user-requirements phase for adoption of International Public Sector Accounting Standards, while the overall design phase is advancing well.

Work in information technology has led to major network capacity upgrades in 56 country offices, so they have access to the same corporate systems and tools as headquarters. High-definition videoconferencing in all regional and subregional offices, and video conference facilities in over 50 countries, are also boosting inter-office communications.

Turning to **human resources**, nearly all staff have been trained in the new Performance Evaluation Management System and completed the first annual cycle including year-end appraisal. For the first time, staff see an explicit link between the objectives of their daily work and those of the Organization. Other developments saw interim guidelines issued to promote voluntary mobility for staff to new jobs – aimed at a more versatile, multi-skilled and experienced workforce – while a comprehensive mobility policy is being finalized.

Meanwhile the Junior Professional Programme was introduced in a bid to introduce more young talent into FAO and received over 2 400 applications, with the first round of recruitments now under way. A strategic action plan for gender balance in the workforce has also been prepared, aimed in particular at increasing the percentage of professional and higher-level positions filled by women. Departmental targets for recruitment of women in 2011 have been established.

Efforts towards **culture change** included a “staff day” which saw more than 500 employees gather at headquarters with many other colleagues joining via video link from Bangkok, Budapest, Accra, Cairo and Ankara, and highlighting how they do their work. Efforts are under way to embed desired behaviors into all IPA actions, while there are now local change teams in field offices and within departments and divisions.

Changes aimed at ensuring more **effective governance** were also highlighted to Members.

These included Regional Conferences providing feedback on prioritization of FAO’s technical work and the vision and work of decentralized offices, under their role as an integral part of the Governing Bodies whose recommendations influence decisions on strategic direction.

An ethics officer was appointed for the first time, and the Finance Committee will be reviewing the specific role and composition of the ethics committee at the former's March 2011 session.

Juneja said that while highlighting progress, the report to Members was also candid in setting out some of the challenges and risks the renewal programme will face in 2011 and in the next biennium, and how these are being addressed.

"We stressed that effective change management can mitigate the adverse short-term effects of performance of an organization over the shorter term, and described the comprehensive measures being taken to reduce risks posed by the programme," he said.

"By openly sharing our challenges and jointly discussing remedies and solutions, we can ensure a renewal process that produces viable, sustainable change for the better."

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*Comments? Suggestions? Write to [Members-Update@fao.org](mailto:Members-Update@fao.org).*