Thirty-fourth Session of the General Assembly  
(Wednesday, 17th November 2004), at 09:30 hours  
Red Room, FAO Headquarters, Building A  

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DRAFT REPORT  
Thirty-third Session of the General Assembly  
Tuesday, 25 November 2003

1. Opening of the thirty-third Session of the General Assembly

The Chairman of the Executive Committee, Mr. Anton Doeve, opened the session at 09:35 hours. He expressed regret at having [had to convene] the Assembly on this day, which was the last day of Ramadan, but [due to the restructuring programme of FAO and the commencement of the Council on the next day, followed by the Conference] a large meeting room was not available on any other date.

2. A. Establishment of a quorum and announcement of the number of proxies [declared valid]

Mr. Doeve announced that a quorum was present in accordance with the Association's Articles. Some 190 members were present and in addition, 20 members held 68 valid proxies. [The names of the proxy holders were announced by Mr. Doeve.]

2. B. Election of the Chairman of the thirty-third Session of the General Assembly

Mr. Doeve proposed that Ms Kay Killingsworth, formerly ADG/Special Adviser, should be the first female to chair the General Assembly and she was elected by acclamation. Ms Killingsworth took the Chair and invited the Assembly to observe a one-minute silence in memory of all members of FFOA and of the UN family who had passed away or been killed while serving the United Nations during the year.

Mr Giorgio Eberle, Mr Maurice Purnell and Mr Bronek Szynalski were elected rapporteurs. Ms Maria Rosaria Buri and Ms Marli Militello Cardinale provided simultaneous English-Italian interpretation.

3. Adoption of the Provisional Agenda

Since no requests to add more items to the Provisional Agenda had been received, the provisional agenda (document FFOA/GA/2003/02) was adopted.


The Draft Report (document FFOA/GA/2002/03) had been circulated in February 2003 with Newsbrief 50. It was adopted by the General Assembly under resolution “A” of document FFOA/GA/2003/07

5. Address by the Representative of the Director General

Ms Rachel Mayanja, Director of the Human Resources Management Division, AFH, spoke on behalf of the Director-General of FAO, who was absent from Rome.

Madam Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a pleasure and honor for me to welcome you to FAO for your 33rd Annual Assembly.

I note that you have a long agenda and a number of resolutions to adopt, which will undoubtedly take up the time, allocated to you this morning. In the course of the meeting, Mr. Gangi, Chief Social Security will inform you in detail on pension and other issues of direct interest to you and respond to questions you might have. Should you require assistance to resolve personal issues related to social security matters, you may call upon the help from the staff in Social Security.

FFOA acts as our “partner” in providing valuable information and assistance to you. Over the years the collaboration between FFOA and the Human Resources Division has increased and I am encouraging the staff
in Social Security to cooperate and establish joint projects with FFOA for the benefit of the retiree community.

I will only briefly touch upon some of the pension and medical coverage issues. The Pension Fund continues to out-perform its benchmarks with a prudent approach to investment and diversified portfolio. Its assets increased by more than 16% since the beginning of the year to approximately 24.3 billion dollars as of November 2003.

There has been an increase in pensions for cost of living in April of this year. In Italy pensions paid in euro increased by 2.8% and pensions paid in US dollars moved up by 4%. Updated information on the Pension Fund and its investments as well as other valuable information including forms for the changing of payment instructions; declaration of country of residence and much more can be obtained on the UN Joint Staff Pension Website. The FFOA website which was created last year with the collaboration of FAO staff contains a direct link to the Pension Fund. In this connection, I would like to recommend to those of you who are using the internet to also click on the FAO site (www.fao.org) which contains a wealth of information on FAO’s substantive programmes and projects as well as special initiatives and events.

The Medical Insurance Plan (BMIP) continues to grow in membership covering more than 4700 retirees from FAO, IFAD and WFP. The plan is heavily used and provides a sound financial protection for its participants. The Human Resources Division as well as the Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage (JAC/MC) closely monitors the plan to ensure that it maintains a satisfactory standard. The FFOA representatives are participating actively in the work of the Joint Advisory Committee and have been providing pragmatic suggestions keeping the interest of the pensioners as well as those of the Organization at heart. To assist retirees as well as staff with queries, a representative of Van Breda is available at FAO four times a month. As part of the new contract, the new Rome-based Medical Advisor has full authority to make decisions on medical issues (e.g. medical necessity, cosmetic treatment) and fee levels.

Retirees can make a valuable contribution to the work of FAO. Almost ten years ago the Director-General established a scheme for the use of retired experts. The purpose of the scheme is to strengthen FAO’s capacity to serve as a centre of excellence and to tap additional resources of expertise to enhance the work of the Organization. Since its launch, some 78 Governments have signed the agreement for the Programme. Thousands of retired experts in various fields of expertise brought their accumulated experience and knowledge to FAO’s fight against hunger and malnutrition.

Many of you continue to have a keen interest in the activities of our organization and I should like to take this opportunity to update you on some important events in FAO.

Since the World Food Summit in 1996, the Organization has taken a number of inter-related initiatives that are intended to contribute collectively to hunger reduction and to the achievement of the Summit goal of halving, by 2015, the number of undernourished people in the world. Subsequent to the WFS:fyi, the Organization has moved forward in promoting the concept of a global partnership to reduce poverty and stop hunger through concrete actions. International Alliance against Hunger has been adopted as the theme for World Food Day this year, following discussions between the Rome-based food agencies (FAO, WFP, IFAD and IPGRI) and representatives of international NGOs. In a statement issued on the occasion of World Food Day, the organizations emphasized that they want to maximize efforts to work together at both national and international levels with other international organizations, food producers and consumers, NGOs and civil society organizations, donors and policy-makers to put a stop to hunger.

During this year’s World Food Day a series of exhibits, debates and ceremonies were organized at FAO headquarters. The Rome-based food agencies participated in an exhibit showcasing the activities in which people have managed to bring together their strength to successfully fight hunger and poverty. FAO Ambassadors discussed ways of raising public awareness and concrete actions to end hunger in the world. The Director-General, in his address at the World Food Day Ceremony, stated that there are three reasons for being hopeful about the future:

First of all, never before in the history of the world, has so much food been produced.

Secondly, there is now a broad international consensus that hunger and poverty must end.

The third reason is that during the past year a number of countries have boldly put the fight against hunger at the forefront of national priorities. The leaders of these countries have embarked on programmes which translate verbal commitments to fight hunger into practical programmes.

I am sure you that you want to proceed with your agenda. However, during the course of your discussions, I should like you to keep in mind that the Organization has always been, and will continue to be, sensitive to the needs and welfare of its former staff and their families.
In conclusion, I would like to thank you all for the contributions you have made during your years of service to the Organization and for your continued interest and support. Thank you for your attention.

6. Reply by the Chairman of the General Assembly

The Chairman of the General Assembly thanked Ms Mayanja for her speech, for the help provided over the past year, in particular with the FFOA Web site, and for the update on the FAO programme in which we all remain interested. The possibility of joint projects is interesting and there may be other fields in which cooperation would be productive.

7. Address by the Representative of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme

Mr Jean-Jacques Graisse, Deputy Executive Director of WFP, representing the Executive Director of WFP who was away from Rome, gave the following address.

It is an honour to address the Former FAO and other UN Staff Association today. Looking around the room, there is a remarkable resource of expertise and experience among your members. Although WFP is growing rapidly, many of the problems we face are similar to those you tackled successfully while you worked for FAO, IFAD and WFP.

This year has been a year of records for WFP, so I would like to briefly update you on our work around the world. We expect to reach roughly 110 million hungry people this year. Our expenditure is forecast at $3.1 billion in 2003, and we anticipate shipping almost 8 million tons of food to 83 countries (including $1.4 billion for bilateral Oil-for-Food programme). These numbers very clearly establish WFP once again as the world’s largest humanitarian agency.

We mounted the largest humanitarian operation in history in Iraq last spring, feeding 26 million people and moving more than 2 million tons in just under eight months. At its height, the agency was moving 1,000 tons an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It has been a major success, though dampened by the tragic loss of 22 colleagues when the UN headquarters in Baghdad was bombed on August 19, followed by the bombing of ICRC premises and the Carabinieri barracks in Nasiriya. WFP’s work continues, however, managed from Amman and Rome. Now we’re getting ready to gradually hand over food distribution to the Iraqi authorities via the Ministry of Trade, even though requested to continue assistance till June 2004.

Security compromises our ability to reach people in need in Liberia too. We are currently reaching about 250,000 people forced from their homes by the violence, but more than half of the country is still too dangerous for us to even assess what the needs are. Yet again, we see that children are at the epicenter of the crisis. Between 70 and 80 percent of the ‘soldiers’ in Liberia were children. For the first time ever, this generation of Liberian children is more poorly nourished and educated than their parents. In this case, we have taken a large step backwards in development terms.

Major famine was averted in southern Africa, where up to 14 million people were affected by drought, poor economic policy and AIDS. Despite a better harvest, the combination of chronic poverty and the highest HIV infection rates in the world mean that 6.5 million people are still extremely vulnerable and need outside aid. Southern Africa cannot afford a loss of momentum now - the regional appeal lays out the steps we need to take to address both short-term critical needs, as well as put in place systems that will allow for longer-term recovery. The humanitarian community came together last year in a remarkable way and has used innovative approaches to address the crisis, such as a regional inter-agency office in Johannesburg. But without stronger investment now, we cannot expect improvement. In fact, we may be faced with even worse problems in the not so distant future.

The rising tide of food emergencies we have seen in the last decade has resulted in a spending pattern for food aid that is simply irrational. Dramatic, high-profile emergencies attract funds. But of the 10 million people who die each year from hunger and malnutrition, just 8 percent die in the kind of emergencies we see on our television screens. More than 9 out of 10 hunger victims die in some dusty village in Malawi, or in the slums of Dhaka. They could not rely on a social safety net. They did not make the news. They did not get a contribution from a sympathetic donor. They just died.

Ethiopia is a classic example. Ethiopia receives the most emergency relief aid per capita, but the lowest investment per capita in development aid. In the latest drought emergency to hit the region, those areas that did benefit from very simple agricultural development – food provided in return for labourers planting trees, digging irrigation ditches, repairing wells – did not require as much emergency aid as those areas that did not benefit from development aid.

WFP is working with our colleagues at FAO and IFAD on a twin-track approach to ending hunger – short-term investments in food aid to prevent lasting damage from malnutrition and longer-term investments
so people in the poorest countries can feed themselves. We now have joint projects for rural development in more than 40 countries - almost double the number of joint projects we worked on together in 2001.

Last month, our Executive Board approved a biennial budget of US $4.8 billion. We have referred to the budget as a beneficiaries’ budget - based first and foremost on their needs. It reflects the operations approved by our Executive Board and emergency operations approved jointly by the Executive Director and Director General Diouf, rather than anticipated donations. We have set the bar very high, so of course the challenge will be to find the money to pay for this budget. The first time I have seen a budget 50% higher than the year before approved.

For a long time, WFP has relied on a very small number of governments to finance our work. The United States, European Union, UK and Japan contributed more than 70 percent of our total income last year. While our traditional donors are very generous and supportive, their budgets are stretched to the limit. If we are to make progress, together with FAO and IFAD towards the goal of halving the number of hungry people, then many more partners need to join the effort. New partners come from both the public and private sectors. Emerging donors such as India, Russia, China, Vietnam and South Africa have made substantial donations in the past year.

New interest is also coming from the private sector. We have entered a partnership with Dutch mail and logistics giant, TPG, worth more than 10 million euro next year. The Boston Consulting Group (BCG) is helping us to streamline our business processes, shortening the time between when a donor makes a pledge, and food actually reaches a beneficiary’s hands. We estimate that we might be able to reach up to 20 percent more people with the same amount of money, if this initiative is successful. Last year in Afghanistan, Swedish telecommunications firm Ericsson collaborated with WFP to establish the first mobile phone system for Afghanistan. Italian clothes manufacturer, Benetton, helped us raise visibility in Asia, Europe and Australia with a print advertising campaign, “Hunger”, valued at 15 million euro. And just last weekend saw the climax of another major partnership with the Rugby World Cup, which had given us free advertising on Qantas flights, in stadiums and on a number of television networks during the matches.

I mentioned earlier that 2003 has been a year of records for WFP. To cope with this unprecedented level of activity, our staff has grown to approximately 9,800 people. I believe that makes us the largest employer in the UN system, outside the UN Secretariat in New York. While most of the new WFP staff are on short-term contracts in the field and therefore do not contribute to the UN Pension Fund, the number of WFP staff who do contribute has more or less doubled in the past 5 years. Official reports from the Pension Fund show that the situation is quite positive, with draw-down on the fund more than adequately covered by new contributions and interest, so we can rest assured that the capital is safe. Certainly we are not facing the same level of uncertainty that several European nations are currently grappling with on their pension systems.

As WFP staff retire, there is likely to be a small rise in the number of potential members for FFOA, so we are committed to building a strong relationship with your organization. The latest version of the agreement between FFOA and WFP is currently receiving a last review by WFP’s senior management, and we believe it will be finalised shortly. The Executive Director has publicly stated on several occasions that he wants WFP to be the employer of choice for the United Nations, and that includes maintaining a strong, friendly relationship with our retirees.

8. Reply by the Chairman of the General Assembly

The Chairman thanked Mr. Graisse for an interesting and thought-provoking address especially concerning the twin-track approach to cooperation with FAO and IFAD. She welcomed the progress on the cooperation agreement; the WFP pensioners are increasing and a cooperation agreement would be a help. As retirees we still feel part of the UN family and are glad that the organizations recognize this, and that we still have contributions to make to the service.

The Chairman explained that we had hoped to have a representative of IFAD but the day was a holiday at IFAD and no representative was available that morning.

9. Statement by the Representative of the Staff Bodies

Ms Margaret Eldon, General Secretary of UGSS, spoke on behalf of APS, FSA and UGSS. She delivered the following address:

Dear Friends,
As always, it is a pleasure for me to be here among you and to have the opportunity to touch upon those issues that concern us all.

In the year ahead the Medical Health Insurance Plans are likely to take a lot of our time, in particular the discussions on after-service medical health coverage, discussions on the share of premiums between the Organization and staff – should it remain 50/50 or should another formula be adopted? – and discussions on moving from premiums as a flat rate for everyone to premiums as a percentage of income – an approach that many other UN organizations have chosen.

Given the difficulties presented by the Headquarters Agreement and its interpretation, we have not proceeded with the question of opening the Commissary to retired staff, but are keeping it on our agenda.

Under the umbrella of the Inter-Staff Consultative Committee, we are working more closely together and we note the request of the FFOA to join also in the humanitarian activities for which the FAO Staff Coop takes the initiative. The results of a UGSS survey among other UN organizations show that our Staff Cooperative offers a far greater number of services and social and recreational activities than those of other UN organizations and needs the full support of everyone to continue.

A new area of concern that we may also wish to look at arises from the negative comments about FAO and its work that were in the media this year. It is not a question of not being open to criticism; it is a question of not accepting slander of the Organization, its work and its staff. We may wish to consider how serving and retired staff can combine their strengths to promote a more correct and positive image of UN organizations within the local community. We look forward to any suggestions FFOA may be able to provide.

Once again, thank you for inviting me. Let us not forget that we all need each other and our strength lies in our unity.

The Chairman thanked Ms Margaret Eldon for the thought provoking issues she had highlighted and the information provided.

10. Statement by the Representative of the Social Security Branch of FAO

Mr Nabil Gangi, Chief, Social Security Branch of FAO, made the following statement.

Madam Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

First allow me to thank you for inviting me to address your annual general meeting. I am pleased to note the increased attendance at such an important meeting and hope that during the next few minutes I will be able to provide some highlights on issues which your esteemed membership may find of importance.

Pension Matters. As you are aware, the Standing Committee of the Pension Fund met in New York amid strong feelings regarding the decision of the General Assembly to postpone implementation of the Pension Board recommendations on review of the 1980’s economy measures until such time as a “clear and upward pattern of the assets valuation is demonstrated”. After a long - and at times strongly-worded - debate, I was pleased to note that the Standing Committee decided to engage with the General Assembly to address its membership’s concerns through the actuarial valuation exercise and subsequently call for a review of its earlier decision. FAFICS with its increased representation on the Board played an important role in articulating the position of the Committee.

Like your current - and future – membership, who would eventually benefit from the implementation of some of the Pension Board recommendations, I am relieved to report to you that as of 9 November 2003, the market value of the assets has increased by over 16% during the last year to reach approximately 24.5 billion US dollars. A figure which, though lower than the record surge of 26.5 billion dollars in March 2001, is a substantial increase from the $19.5 billion level to which the fund sank at the end of 2001. Although our pension is of a defined-benefit nature, I am sure that your membership appreciates that the positive returns on its investments and the rebound of the financial markets provide a sense of security and certainty for earnings to our current and future retirees.

It is not a secret that a large number of your membership residing in Italy and other EU countries has been voicing concerns regarding the purchasing power of their pension benefits calculated in US dollars. Social Security has been sympathetic to such concerns and has provided calculation of estimates to over 100 FAO and WFP retirees who requested review of their benefits under the double track mechanism. Although no one can ascertain with certitude what the future holds in the currency market – or any other future aspect for that matter – I feel that members who have not yet reviewed their benefit calculation under the alternative double-track system should approach Social Security for such calculations in order to reach an informed decision on the option to exercise in order to mitigate the US Dollar loss in value. Though I agree that the 4% increase in cost of living in US dollars pension benefits could not be seen to compensate for more than 20%
loss in the value of the US dollars to the euro over the past fifteen months, decisions on changing tracks should be weighed carefully on an individual basis in view of their irreversibility in the future.

Albeit your membership is served directly by the New York Secretariat of the Pension Fund, Social Security continues to play an important role in liaising with the retirees particularly in Italy on matters ranging from issuing certificates and change of addresses to locating individuals who missed completing their certificates of entitlement, as well as requests to the Emergency Fund. On the latter front, I am pleased to report that our interventions with the Fund have led to reconsideration of earlier negative decisions on requests to the Emergency Fund from FAO and WFP retirees in at least 3 cases.

**Medical Insurance**  The Basic Medical Insurance plan (BMIP) continues to grow covering, as of today, more than 4,700 retirees, from FAO, WFP and IFAD.

Through the medical booklet sent in Spring 2003 you would have noted the improved benefits introduced to the plan in January 2002: an increase in maximum levels for dental coverage to 728 euro per year with a two year carry over provision; an increase in hearing aid maximum from its 852 euro level to 1,040 euro per year with a new one year carry-over provision.

With the encouragement of the JAC/MC, a vigilant monitoring of the adherence of Van Breda to the reasonable and customary limits by my colleagues in the Insurance Unit has been an integral part of our work plan for the biennium. Though a challenge to our modest resources in Social Security, ensuring that “Reasonable and Customary limits” are set and monitored for each of the largest 5 countries by claims, has proved to be an effort worth investing as we saw a substantial reduction in participants’ complaints during the last 12 months. This is an indicator of increased satisfaction by the participants of the levels of claims, reimbursement by the plan and an added financial security.

Unfortunately better benefits have a price! Medical inflation has soared over the past two years causing several states to review the benefits extended to the aged under statutory national health schemes. In Italy we have seen medical services whose prices have virtually doubled since the introduction of the euro in January 2002, which could only result in increased premiums for an insurance plan like ours. Although the increase in premium levels for 2004 is yet to be calculated – based on 2003 claims – Social Security will continue to work with FFOA within and outside of the JAC/MC in order to mitigate the effect of the eventual increases in the most ways possible.

FFOA through its strong presence on the JAC/MC continues to play a major role in shaping our medical plan ensuring its viability and sustainability for all participants. For that, my service and I are grateful for your support and feedback and I assure you of our engagement in the issues of importance to your membership ranging from allowing retirees in Euro countries to pay their contributions in euro, to review of benefits ceilings and cost containment measures.

On the administrative side of our plan, I would like to bring to your membership’s attention that, as of January 2004, Van Breda has appointed Doctor Massimo Fantoni as its new visiting Medical Advisor at FAO and WFP. A qualified physician with a long record of research and practice, Dr Fantoni would be available twice a month at FAO premises to advise participants on medical issues surrounding their claims. On the other hand you may note from the letterhead a slight change in the Insurers corporate name as well as a change of address for receiving claims. The new addresses will be included in the new medical booklet and ID cards to be distributed early next year. In the meantime the old ID cards could still be used and the old addresses are still valid for receipt of any claims.

**Group Life Insurance (GLADI)**  Earlier this year we embarked together on the renewal of the Group Life, Accident and Disability Insurance Policy (GLADI). With the participation of FFOA and other staff representative bodies in the GLADI Ad Hoc Committee, we were able to achieve more than 25% reduction in insurance premiums paid by participants. More specifically for your membership who continue to have GLADI coverage, savings in premiums have ranged between 22 and 45% depending on the age and benefit.

Our work together over the last year has borne encouraging results on which we should build for our joint projects in the next year. I look forward to reporting to your membership on the result of our projects next year and wish you a successful meeting. Thank you.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gangi for his address and all the Social Security staff for their help and cooperation during the past year. The floor was then open for comments and questions.

Mr Suhail Muammar commented on the effect of the euro on prices and the need to monitor the cost of living in Italy.
Ms Sandra Hopper said that for a large bill she had requested to be paid in the currency of expenses (sterling) but about £40 had been deducted from the payment and she could get no explanation. Mr Gangi said that repayment in the currency of expenses was possible and allowed some flexibility in such cases, it avoided losses on the exchange rate but people did suffer from banking charges that FAO cannot control.

Ms. Gerda Sperl asked if some briefing on the pension double track could be provided. Mr Gangi suggested that she should attend a retirement seminar, it might be better to have a discussion with a Social Security staff member or to send an e-mail asking for clarification. But the decision is an individual one. Some written material can be provided and distributed by FFOA

12. Statement of work achieved during 2003

The Chairman of the General Assembly recalled that the Statement of Work accomplished during 2003 had been circulated with the other documents and need not be read here. Mr. Anton Doeve provided an update on the report. The result of the referendum was that all proposals put forward by the Executive Committee were approved by more than the required two-thirds majority and will be implemented as from 1 January 2004. Life membership will require payment of a fee equal to 15 years annual membership which is still below the average period of survival of UN pensioners. FFOA has to provide for the whole survival period so existing life members will be asked to pay voluntarily an additional five years. As a transitory measure annual members will have the opportunity to become life members by paying the difference between the number of annual fees they have already paid and the total of fifteen years. From 1st January 2004 annual members will not any longer qualify to become life members.

A new computerized accounting system is being introduced. The amount available for the Emergency Fund had been increased to €5000 to meet the increased demand.

FFOA participated in the FAFICS Council meeting and is participating in the Working Group preparing a database containing data of the medical cover available in almost all UN Organizations with particular reference to Long Term Care – a complex issue.

FFOA will try to restart the popular computer-training courses in 2004 – the problem is to find a trainer and proper training rooms.

The Programme of Activities proposed for 2004 had been introduced for the first time to provide members with an explanation of the need to include the funds required for such activities in the budget proposed for 2004. For some of the initiatives the Executive Committee will need volunteers to help for a limited period of time. The Web site had 155 users, the oldest is 89 years old so we hope that many more pensioners will be encouraged to register as users and visit the site.

Mr Doeve said that he wished to make a special mention of Ms Vera Fano who started her career with the International Institute of Agriculture, the predecessor of FAO, continued with FAO and on retirement in 1983 served as Assistant Treasurer and Treasurer to the FFOA, and could now record 60 years of service to our community. The announcement was greeted with prolonged applause.

The Chairman thanked Mr Doeve for his comprehensive report and thanked the Executive Committee and the Office Assistants for their efforts. Questions were invited.

Mr Hassan Nabhan suggested that it would be useful to have a room in FAO where retirees could meet. Mr Doeve replied that FFOA fully supported the idea of a room for pensioners, it is not a new idea, and if the possibility arises the Executive Committee will certainly take it.

Mr Suhail Mu-ammar suggested that FFOA could recruit even more members by approaching staff who are retiring. Mr Doeve pointed out that brochures are handed out and FFOA participates in the retirement seminars. He agreed that the Committee must intensify its efforts, and would like to approach members about to retire but the Executive Committee has no information on dates of retirement which are not public information. He hoped that the cooperation agreements will help to recruit more IFAD and WFP staff.

The Report of the Executive Committee was approved by acclamation.

13. Report of the Association’s Finances


Expenditures are increasing, particularly the cost of printing and meetings. The Emergency Fund had been increased and seen increased use. Provision is made for legal assistance but may again not be needed.
He mentioned that members complain that there are no excursions but the Executive Committee tried to organize them and demand seems to have gone down – probably because of higher costs. Suggestions would be welcome and also some volunteers to help organize trips.

Questions were invited from the floor.

Mr Richard Hancock asked why the Emergency Fund did not appear in the budget in spite of apparent outgoings of €4000. He also asked why 25% of the budget goes on computer software, which seems high especially as 2002 had no such cost. Mr Monciotti replied that the Emergency Fund is a revolving fund with outgoings repaid, the funds are an item in our budget as required, and it would not serve a useful purpose to put them separately. The cost of computer use is high but we have to pay the price of progress in order to keep up with FAO technology.

Mr Suhail Mu-ammar said that 35% of the budget for social activities seems too high. Mr Monciotti pointed out that it is stated clearly that social activities are self-funding – participants pay for themselves in advance.

The Chairman said that there were three resolutions to be adopted, with points made in the discussion to be reflected in the minutes. The resolutions on the Financial Report and Financial Status and the Draft Budget for 2004 were adopted by the Assembly by acclamation.

Mr. Ugo Marchetti and Mr. David Baugh, were appointed External Auditors for the accounts of 2003, by acclamation.

14. **Other business**

There was none on the agenda.

Mr Doeve then made certain announcements. He reminded the participants that the data collected from older members was incomplete for the requirements of the database and that forms were available to complete the missing information. There was also a form for Web site users.

Mr. Doeve announced that the annual social lunch, after the Assembly, would be in the Indonesia Room. The Year-end Christmas Party would also be held in the Indonesia Room on Wednesday, 17th December, at 17:00 hrs.

The advisor from ING, one of FFOA’s banks, was outside if anyone wished to speak with her.

As traditionally happens, Ms Eileen Nolan would be collecting outside the Red Room for the Old People’s Home next to FAO. This collection has gone on for 45 years, there are 85 residents at present and Mr. Doeve asked participants to give generously. Last year a total of €2802 was contributed. (This year the amount collected was € 2582).

Finally, Mr. Doeve thanked all those who had assisted in the preparation and implementation of the General Assembly, in the first place the Chairman of the Assembly and also the interpreters, the FAO Security and Conference Services and all members of the Executive Committee.

16. **Closure of the thirty-third Session of the General Assembly**

The Chairman of the General Assembly closed the Assembly at 11:55 hours.

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**Please retain this report for use at the thirty-fourth General Assembly**

**[Wednesday, 17th November 2004]**