

**Chairs' Aide Mémoire of Joint Meeting of CoC-IEE WG I & WG II**  
**Wednesday 27 February 2008, 09.30 – 12.30**

Vic Heard, Chair WG I, and Natalie Feistritzter, Co-Chair WG II

1) **Technical Committees** (IEE Recommendations 4.11 & 4.12): Members emphasised that the Technical Committees are fundamental to FAO's work. There was general satisfaction with the quality of work and the results of the Technical Committees with special appreciation of COFI and COFO. Members agreed with the recommendations of the IEE, with the considerations and reservations indicated below:

- a) Many members supported the proposal of the IEE that the Committees should report to the Council on all matters relating to FAO's programme and directly to the FAO Conference on matters relating to global policy and legislation in their respective areas of mandate. They argued that this would both allow FAO to better exercise its global governance role and reduce duplication and inefficiency between the Council and Conference. They were also of the view that on global governance issues a technical committee of the whole membership should report to the political body of the whole membership, i.e. the Conference, while freeing the Council up to exercise effective oversight of the Organization and its programmes. Some others considered that as formalisation of this relationship would require a change in the Basic Texts, there should be caution (management representatives noted that in their view a Basic Text Change was not a major issue). Some other Members argued that it was the task of the Council to prepare the Conference, including on global governance issues and thus the existing relationship of technical committees, reporting only to the Council should remain;
- b) It was noted that the CFS had a Bureau which was in office between sessions and there was agreement that Chairs of technical committees should remain in office between sessions and that for several of the Committees there was inadequate consultation with the membership on agendas which this would help to improve;
- c) There was agreement that, as was done in COFO and the CFS, there could be more use of informal sessions and side events, also in COAG and the CCP but care should be taken that this did not make participation by developing countries and other countries with small delegations difficult. In inviting NGOs to meetings, care needed to be taken to ensure that there was balanced participation from developing country NGOs;
- d) With respect to the use of consultant experts to prepare work for the Technical Committees and support them, it was noted that these should be selected on the basis of technical competence and should be politically neutral. It was also important to preserve regional balance in such expertise. This expertise was a supplement to, not a replacement of, FAO secretariat expertise;

2) Regarding individual Committees:

- a) COAG: The Working Groups did not favour dividing the work into segments dealing with different subject matter areas but considered that there could be more systematic treatment of the various areas of work within the agenda while continuing to maintain the multi-disciplinary nature of COAG. More adequate consideration of livestock issues was agreed to be important and some members suggested that COAG might meet annually;
- b) CCP: The Working Groups did not agree with the IEE recommendation to move the venue of meetings to Geneva but did favour strengthened interaction with UNCTAD and WTO. It was agreed that inter-governmental commodity groups should meet flexibly and interaction with producers and industry representatives could be further strengthened; and
- c) CFS: The Working Group agreed that the CFS could meet one per biennium rather than annually. The CFS also needed to revitalise its role in monitoring and driving progress on the World Food Summit Goal, including reviewing the State of Food Insecurity in the World.

3) It was agreed that the **conferences of parties of treaties, conventions and agreements** (such as Codex and IPPC) should have a line of reporting to the Governing Bodies through the relevant technical committee.

4) **Ministerial meetings**: In line with the recommendations of the IEE, it was agreed that Ministerial meetings could play an important role, especially for Forestry and Fisheries and should continue to be used when matters developed at the technical level needed political endorsement or more visibility. However, they should be used with caution and with endorsement from the Governing Bodies and should not duplicate work of the Conference or the Technical Committees. They should not form a part of the formal governance structure, but when they did convene it was clearly on global policy issues and their recommendations should be transmitted to the Conference.