

**Co-Chairs' Aide Mémoire of Fifth Meeting of CoC-IEE WG II**  
**Tuesday 11 March 2008**

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- 1) **Regional Conferences:** The Working Group agreed that regional conferences had an important potential governance role to play but were not performing well at the moment. It was agreed that Regional Conferences:
  - a) Should become a full part of the governance structure of FAO and should discuss and feed into the Conference and Council:
    - i) Regional implications and priorities in global governance issues,
    - ii) Regional priorities for FAO programmes.This would require a change in the Basic Texts;
  - b) Should develop issues where regional policy coherence was important and perform an oversight role for FAO programmes in their regions. Many members considered that FAO Representatives from the region should be present at the Conference as well as FAO regional and headquarters staff particularly concerned with the region;
  - c) Should be held where appropriate in tandem or jointly with conferences of inter-governmental regional bodies, concerned with agriculture. This was definitely the case for IICA in Latin America and the Caribbean;
  - d) The decision as to whether to convene a regional conference should rest with the region; and there should be much more consultation with members to prepare agendas and formats for the regional conferences; with flexibility between regions as to their agendas, frequency and duration. This would normally be ensured by the regional office but could also be a responsibility of a bureau for the regional conference; and
  - e) Regional Conference Chairs, or if more appropriate rapporteurs, should remain in office between sessions of the regional conference and the Chair of the regional conference or a representative should present the regional conference report to the FAO Council and Conference.
- 2) A significant group of members considered that, as the regional conferences had in many cases been performing poorly, there should be an evaluation after six years of how well the new arrangements were working and if the effectiveness had not improved considerably, discontinuation of the regional conferences should be considered at that point. Another significant group of members considered that regional conferences would be an important part of the new governance architecture and such a review was unnecessary.
- 3) **Role of the Independent Chairperson of the Council and a Governance Secretariat –**  
Preliminary discussion: Members agreed that the Council needed to be further empowered to exercise its governance role in oversight and policy setting for FAO's work and the Independent Chairperson could play an important facilitation role in this (some members considered that the word independent in the title for the Chairperson was misleading but this was not a major issue).
- 4) To play this facilitation role properly the Independent Chairperson should be present in Rome to a greater extent than had occurred in the recent past. It was an omission that the role of the

Independent Chairperson was not specified in the Basic Texts. Members agreed that he/she should continue to be elected by the whole membership in the Conference, rather than the Council. It was also clear that she/he should play a significant facilitation role for the Council and that any suggestion that the Independent Chairperson could have an executive role overlapping with that of the Director-General should be quite clearly ruled out. However, diverse views were expressed on how prominent a role should be assigned to the Chair and on cost implications. A significant group of members spoke in favour of a strongly enhanced role for the Chair with the necessary secretariat support. It was agreed that the Chair needed some limited secretariat support reporting to her/him in order to carry out an effective facilitation role, but while a group of members supported a small secretariat charged with support to the Governing Bodies, others were more cautious on this.

- 5) **Improving the efficiency, effectiveness and member ownership in Governance:** The Working Group agreed that it was important to improve the efficiency and effectiveness and member ownership of governance processes, and that efficiency and effectiveness was not just something which should be asked of FAO management but also of the governing bodies themselves. The IEE had proposed a performance contract for governance. Members agreed that this was rather a pretentious phrase but that there should be a forward work programme for all the governing bodies, perhaps on a rolling basis and that it should be possible to introduce a monitoring mechanism on progress which also included some indicators of efficiency. Several members referred to the application of governance performance targets and indicators in their own national systems. The management was asked to seek examples from other comparable organizations. Also:
- a) Reporting and the use of drafting committees: Most members agreed that there should be less negotiation of full reports. In their view line by line negotiation of the discussion of a meeting as distinct from the decisions was not productive. There could be more formal drafted decisions and recommendations, as was the practice in many other UN Organizations. This would make the actual decisions clearer. These decisions did require drafting committees or Friends of the Chair for their finalisation. Some members then suggested that a Chair's aide mémoire or the verbatim would be adequate record of the discussion as it was the decision which mattered;
  - b) Flexibility in the timing and duration of meetings: It was agreed that there should be more flexibility in the timing and duration of meetings, including the Council and the Programme and Finance Committees (PC/FC). As had been discussed previously, special sessions of Technical Committees could be convened to discuss urgent issues, within the full governance framework. As a general consideration the Council and the PC/FC should meet more frequently and for shorter sessions;
  - c) Informal briefings prior to meetings could be a useful introduction to the items under discussion for representations in Rome but could not entirely substitute for introductions in meetings as delegations came also from capitals;
  - d) Presentation of reports by Chairs: As previously discussed in the context of regional conferences and technical committees, it was agreed that Chairs or their representatives should generally present the reports of their meetings to the Conference and Council, as was the practice for the PC/FC;
  - e) Consensus and voting: Members agreed that it was always preferable to achieve consensus, but voting had been and could continue to be resorted to as necessary.