

Chair's Aide-Mémoire

Joint meeting of Working Groups I, II and III of the Conference Committee for IEE Follow-up (CoC-IEE)

Friday 17 April 2009

Chaired by Noel de Luna, Chair WG III

Address by the Director-General

1. At the opening of the meeting, the Director-General made a statement in which he stressed his continued commitment and that of the Secretariat to fully support the FAO reform process, underscoring the extent of change and intensity of work that was ongoing. He expressed deep appreciation for Members' genuine efforts in driving this process, and appealed for additional contributions to the Trust Fund for IPA implementation to avoid a curtailment of planned IPA actions from May and ensure delivery of the collective commitments for a renewed FAO.
2. Members welcomed the Director-General's address (available at www.fao.org/uploads/media/Director%20General%20speech%20CoC%2017%20April%20final.pdf). At the end of the meeting, the Representative of the Director-General to the CoC-IEE conveyed the Director-General's appreciation for the opportunity to interface directly with the Working Groups and his willingness to engage in a dialogue with Members around predetermined themes.

Review of decentralized offices staffing, location and coverage

1. The Management paper entitled *Review of decentralized offices staffing, location and coverage* (available at www.fao.org/uploads/media/Reviewofdecentralizedoffices.pdf) was appreciated by the Working Groups. Members stressed the importance of strengthening FAO's decentralized structure, recognizing that the success of the Organization depends on its ability to extend the knowledge it produces to the field to help countries address the challenges they face. Members welcomed the intention of the Director-General to include resources for Member visits to Decentralized Offices (DOs) in the PWB 2010-11.
2. Members were concerned that the time foreseen to discuss this and other important topics would not be sufficient and requested that adequate time be devoted to analyze key issues in more depth, including through informal seminars.
3. The three Notes contained in the Management paper were presented and discussed one by one, namely: (i) Functioning as One Organization (ii); Coverage of the Near East Regional Office; and (iii) Review of FAO Country Coverage.

Functioning as One Organization

4. Members generally welcomed the first Note of the paper, which was a progress report on work being undertaken to improve integration between Headquarters and the DOs. A number of proposals for further work were made, including:
 - the need for more precise proposals on roles, functions, staffing, competencies, and training needs of DOs;
 - analysis of issues necessary for a successful decentralization such as the strengths and weaknesses of DOs, their capacity to shoulder additional responsibilities, and the requirements

for the successful adoption of a Results Based Management, improved knowledge networking, and better alignment with national, subregional and regional development agendas;

- more information on the current structure of DOs in light of new developments since the publication of the IEE report, including the establishment of new Subregional Offices and Multidisciplinary Teams;
- ways to adequately resource and empower Country Offices in the new architecture of DOs;
- the need to take greater account of the results of the 2004 Evaluation of Decentralization;
- the need for closer collaboration with the Rome-based UN Organizations and better coordination with the work of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

Coverage of the Near East Regional Office

5. In considering Note 2 submitted to clarify the coverage of the Near East Regional Office (IPA Action 3.86), Members agreed that the regional breakdown for Council election purposes, and the established practice of allowing dual (and sometimes triple) participation at Regional Conferences at the request of a Member Nation (possibly as observer), were not being called into question.
6. On the specific question of the Near East Regional Office (RNE) geographical coverage, it was considered that the issues at stake needed to be further elucidated. For example, it was noted that, while five countries from North Africa were covered by the RNE, 14 of the 32 countries invited to attend the Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC) were not covered by RNE. Therefore there was a need to analyze further how differences between the RNE coverage and attendance at the NERC might possibly detract from the operational effectiveness of RNE and the strengthened role for Regional Conferences called for in the IPA.
7. Management was requested to revise and expand the Note on coverage of the RNE in light of the discussion by Members to allow Regional Groups to consult on the issue among themselves and with Capitals, and report back to the Working Groups as soon as possible.

Review of FAO country coverage

8. Based on Note 3, Members discussed the work done on IPA Action 3.84 for FAO's country coverage (which were based on proposals in paragraphs 1057-1069 of the IEE Report). Members discussed the criteria and how these could be used to gauge the need for Country Offices, thereby doing away with the present vacancy management approach to handling the structural budgetary deficit.
9. Members agreed on the need for a strengthened FAO capacity at country level. However, based on the results of the preliminary analysis, some Members considered that the IPA criteria were not appropriate to provide the basis for changes in country coverage. Some other Members considered that the IPA criteria, if applied flexibly, could offer Management a useful starting point to develop proposals for an effective Country Office network.
10. The potential pitfalls of a mechanical application of the IPA criteria were stressed. Some Members considered that emergency projects would continue to be mainly handled through units at Headquarters and did not need to be included in the analysis.
11. Given the wide ranging opinions expressed at the meeting, Management was requested to explore different ways to address the structural budgetary deficit for the FAO Representatives network, including further elaboration of the IPA criteria for country offices in a flexible manner. This should take into account differences among regions and subregions, which should be further

discussed by the Regional Groups before returning to the Working Groups, bearing in mind the tight deadline.

Progress report on IPA implementation and status of the Trust Fund budget

1. For lack of time, it was agreed to postpone discussion of this item to the next meeting of the Working Groups, noting that a Management paper reporting progress had been distributed to Members (available at www.fao.org/uploads/media/ProgressReportonIPAimplementationandTrustFundbudgetsituation.pdf).

Possible measures for consultations with NGOs/CSOs in the work of the CoC-IEE

1. Further to a request of the Working Groups at their 24 March 2009 meeting, more details were provided in an *Addendum* (www.fao.org/uploads/media/AddendumtoNGOCSOPaperFinal.pdf) to the previous Management paper (www.fao.org/uploads/media/NGOMeasuresK4431_2.pdf) on participation of NGOs/CSOs in FAO fora, including possible modalities for increased interaction such as web-based consultation and the participation of selected focal points in specific CoC-IEE meetings.
2. Further to discussion on the long term involvement of NGOs/CSOs in the work of the Organization, including the prospect of amendments to the Basic Texts in the future, Members considered the *ad hoc* arrangements that had been in place for some time, by virtue of which NGOs such as the *Via Campesina* were already regularly invited to FAO sessions. Although FAO did not follow the ECOSOC practice of inviting national NGOs to participate in its meetings, it was suggested that web inputs from the NGO/CSO community on specific issues could be presented in summary format to FAO Members to better inform decision-making. The uniquely advisory role of NGOs/CSOs was stressed.
3. No clear consensus eventually emerged on whether to invite NGO/CSO representatives to meetings of the CoC/IEE at this point in time. However, it was considered that a phased approach should be adopted, beginning with the posting of the *Members' Update FAO Renewal Newsletter*, at present available only on the Permanent Representatives Web site, on the Organization's public Web site as a first step towards sharing information on the reform process with a wider audience.

Annex

Agenda for the meeting

1. Address by the Director-General
2. Chair's introduction
3. Review of decentralized offices staffing, location and coverage
4. Progress report on IPA implementation and status of the Trust Fund budget
5. Possible measures for consultation with NGOs/CSOs in the work of the CoC-IEE.