

Chair's Aide-Mémoire

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

Wednesday 16 September 2009

Chaired by Noel de Luna, Chair WG III

Review of decentralized offices staffing, location and coverage

1. The Working Groups welcomed the revised version of the document entitled *Review of decentralized offices staffing, location and coverage* (www.fao.org/uploads/media/ReviewDOK5964E.pdf). Recalling that decentralization issues have been considered at three formal meetings in April, June and July, as well as in two informal seminars in April and July, the Working Groups underscored that FAO's decentralized structure was a critical aspect of the reform of the Organization. They noted the progress made in reducing fragmentation and improving the balance between global, regional, subregional and country concerns. The enhanced role of the Decentralized Offices (DOs) in preparing programme and budget proposals for their offices, as well as for the region in general, for the 2010-11 biennium, were also highlighted.

2. The Working Groups recognized that improving the performance of the DOs was a shared priority of all Members and supported the "Functioning as One" agenda outlined in the various documents reviewed during 2009, in areas such as enhanced IT infrastructure, improved mobility and rotation, benchmarking and performance-based reporting and monitoring system, knowledge networking, transfer of TCP responsibilities and some OCD functions, and delegation of procurement. In this regard, the following points were also emphasized:

- the need for greater flexibility of the DOs network to help it better respond to changing priorities;
- the importance of striking the right balance between the additional responsibilities being given to DOs and the resources provided, including the roles and functions of the Country Offices;
- the continuation of the decentralization reform in the 2010-11 biennium, involving several IPA projects that would evolve around the strengthening of DOs.

3. The Working Groups further examined the country coverage criteria, discussing whether and how they could usefully serve as a guideline for managing the DOs network. A whole range of views were expressed by Members in this connection, including the following:

- the criteria for country coverage established in the IPA were intended as guidelines to assist Management in reviewing FAO's country presence;
- other forms of FAO representation could be considered, such as multi-accreditation or joint offices with other UN organizations, particularly the Rome-based agencies;
- efforts to recover outstanding host country contributions should continue to be actively pursued;
- the regular costs of the DOs should not be contingent on extra-budgetary resources;
- the roles and tasks of the various DOs should be more clearly defined; and
- a better use of local expertise should be encouraged, and local staff should have access to training and career development.

4. Management invited Members to provide specific reactions on the application of the criteria by country, as suggested in the letter of 28 July 2009 from the Chairperson of the CoC-IEE. The Working Groups requested Management to prepare, for consideration by the Governing Bodies in 2010, a proposal that would provide a medium to long-term vision related to the structure and functioning of the DOs network, bearing in mind the discussions in the Working Groups on country coverage.

Annex

Agenda for the meeting

1. Chair's introduction
2. Final review of decentralized offices staffing, location and coverage