

**Director General's Address
to the Joint Meeting of Working Groups I, II and III of the CoC-IEE
April 17, 2009**

The Immediate Plan of Action for FAO's renewal is unique in many ways: it is the culmination of the most comprehensive reform process that any UN organization has ever undergone; it is also extremely ambitious in its timeframe for implementation; and it is being carried out with a high degree of staff participation and in close partnership between the Secretariat and you, our Member Countries.

You will wish to be reassured about my full and personal commitment to the reform process in FAO. I have previously stated this in my addresses, and I repeat my untiring commitment to the renewal of FAO also today. But beyond that, my commitment should be judged by the results we have jointly achieved in the past year and our ongoing achievements.

Thanks to our joint efforts, we had a most successful outcome at the Special Conference in November 2008. And as we have moved into implementation in 2009, I have assigned key staff from all levels to champion the renewal of FAO. We have devised an arrangement to ensure good delivery, oversight and strategic guidance mechanisms.

I have personally been available to resolve any hiccups that have surfaced, or to deal expeditiously with issues that have been put to me for guidance. And as many of you have gathered from our bilateral meetings, I am fully informed of your discussions.

I would like to think that, with these arrangements and this type of engagement, I have set a most visible example of the culture that the IEE itself upholds for FAO – delegating wherever possible, without abrogating my personal responsibility and accountability, while being less hierarchical and more open – to implement lasting reforms that will endure beyond my tenure as Director-General.

We are moving ahead full steam in the implementation process. About one half of the IPA actions have started and even a few, some 3%, have been concluded. The Reform Support Group is working to ensure thematic coordination and integration within the 14 projects. To date, at the fourth month of implementation, the Senior Management Team for the IPA, chaired by Jim Butler, has met formally 20 times, and informally on countless occasions, providing guidance to the process. The SMM has also met periodically under my Chairmanship. Extensive consultations with staff in headquarters and in the decentralized offices, as well as with the staff associations are taking place. The Reform Support Group is holding information meetings with departments. I met with the staff representative bodies yesterday, to learn first-hand of their perspectives and concerns.

The reform process is complex, all the more so as the IPA is a package of inter-dependent measures which cannot be implemented in isolation. We are also learning from the experience with reform in other UN organizations, such as IFAD and WHO. But because of the scope and speed of FAO's reforms, we are necessarily learning by doing as we move ahead. You have already acknowledged that we will consequently make occasional mistakes, but we will learn from them and self-correct. I am following closely your discussions at the Conference Committee and its Working Groups and greatly value your comments and insights. You are

helping us to challenge ourselves, sometimes to take initiatives that are not fully tested, and we need your continued encouragement and feedback.

One such “learning by doing” initiative is the informal briefing sessions, of which we have had two up to now. These give us the opportunity to hear from you in an informal setting and help us better understand your views and concerns. I hope that our Newsletter and revamped Permanent Representatives Website have also improved our communication with Rome-based Members and capitals. I also welcome visits that some Members have undertaken to our regional and country offices in Asia, Europe and Africa, which also provide us useful perspectives and feedback. You can rest assured that I shall be personally following up on the feedback we receive from you wherever appropriate.

So although we are at the beginning of the IPA implementation, we are already starting to see important changes in the Organization, including in the way we work. I would like to highlight a few key issues.

We are making progress in developing our results-based framework as part of the Medium Term Plan. This is helping to provide a means to focus our work and your resources – assessed and voluntary – on achieving sustainable reductions in hunger and improving economic wellbeing with due regard for the earth’s natural resources. Further discussion on our proposed Organizational Results and headquarters and decentralized structures will culminate in the programme of work and budget for the next biennium. By July, we will have all the elements in place, including the proposed resource allocations for 2010-11.

Regarding our headquarters structure, I have taken timely action to tackle the delaying of one-third of our headquarters D-level posts, which has made it possible for us to reduce by more than USD 3 million the estimated cost of restructuring. We have taken note of the guidance provided by you at the meetings of 23 and 24 March and we will be providing more details for your meetings of June. The new post of Deputy Director-General has been advertised. On the subject of decentralization, we look forward to the outcome of your deliberations today. And over the weekend, we will be receiving the results of the Stage 2 of the Root and Branch Review from Ernst and Young, which will provide recommendations on crucial aspects of reform of the Organization’s administration, human and financial resources management together with associated costs and savings.

In the human resources domain, which is an essential area of the IPA, we have advanced in the implementation of a performance evaluation management system linked to the results framework. We have developed policies for lowering the median age of the staff, introduced flexible working arrangements, and are discussing revised policies regarding rotation and the use of retirees and consultants, to give a few examples. We are also expanding the Management Development Centre together with our sister Rome-based agencies, and developing new management and leadership development programmes. The project on improved management information reporting is also ongoing.

The culture change team is in the process of finishing an internal vision statement. The team has met close to one thousand people in headquarters and three regional offices and hosted activities in a sub-regional office and seven country offices. Using participatory methodologies such as open houses, focus groups and drop-in sessions, they have also developed a set of concrete proposals on career development and advancement for staff, rewards and recognition, and inclusive work environment.

Last but not least, as a noteworthy example of joint work and partnership between the Secretariat and the Member Countries, important changes to the Basic Texts have been discussed to Members' satisfaction in record time. I wish to congratulate you for this success.

I have highlighted these areas also to underline the extent of change and the intensity of work that is ongoing. It takes an enormous amount of work to come up with wide-ranging proposals through the consultative and participative process that we have established. The staff is the lifeblood of this Organization, and I hope you can see for yourselves the Secretariat's commitment to the reform process, as so many staff take up additional functions with enthusiasm and dedication, adding on to their long working hours.

I am equally appreciative of your efforts, as Member Countries in the driving seat of a multifaceted process, attending all the formal and informal meetings in large numbers since the start of this process. But I am concerned that a commitment that you collectively made at the Special 2008 Conference is not yet being carried through. I am referring of course to the resources to implement the IPA. Many of you have contributed to the Trust Fund, and I thank you for it, but we are far from our target of USD19.9 million for this year – a number that will require adjustment and your careful review after the Root and Branch Review.

We have already mentioned that management shall have to revisit the scope of its work in 2009 if significant additional commitments are not received by May, and I need to reiterate that today. This matter is also proving to be a preoccupation for staff, who are concerned that words and intentions will not translate into action without adequate funding. On my part, I am sending letters to all Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives to appeal for additional voluntary contributions, but providing resources and delivering on your collective commitments is ultimately your responsibility.

Finally, as you all recall, the IEE said that it could summarize the 400 page document in three words: Reform with Growth. The Conference Resolution asked the Conference Committee to analyse the concept of "Reform with Growth" and submit proposals to the 2009 Conference. We will provide a conceptual paper to support your deliberations at the next joint session of the Programme and Finance Committees. As with all matters of resources, we will fully and faithfully support your deliberations, and trust that you will assume your role to take this concept further.

I am sure that we will achieve our shared ambitions for an Organization that is truly fit to face the challenges of feeding a growing population subjected to food crises and climate change at a time of global financial crisis. The world needs FAO now more than ever. We clearly have a very ambitious IPA implementation programme during the coming months, which will require the same spirit of give and take that prevailed throughout 2008. This is inevitable, as complex challenges do not have a single solution. You can count on my flexibility and on my stewardship for us to meet the evolving needs and expectations of Member Countries through a renewed FAO.

I thank you all for your genuine commitment to FAO and look forward to your sustained support and to our joint work.