

FAO

Members' Update



From the Director-General

It gives me pleasure to introduce the first edition of *Members' Update*, an informal newsletter addressed to FAO's Members. As we undertake the largest reform in FAO's history, we are aware of the Members' need to be kept informed on a regular basis. We will be using a variety of channels to share information with you -- *Members' Update* delivered via email and in print, the Permanent Representatives' Web site, "Atrium seminars" for Permanent Representatives, informal briefings, question-and-answer sessions, and more.

These days at FAO, we are doing many things for the first time, and others in new ways. This newsletter is no exception. For now, its primary purpose is to help track our progress against the activities described in the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal. The Trust Fund established by the FAO Conference last November continues to receive contributions from Members, and you will find a situation update here and in subsequent newsletters. Over time, we will be introducing improvements and possibly diversifying to offer more news about the Organization and our work. I encourage you to give us your feedback, and to let us know which topics interest you most. The reform and renewal of this great institution -- like the achievement of the Members' Global Vision and objectives -- is our shared endeavour. Thank you for your support.

-- Jacques Diouf, Director-General, FAO

Results-based planning activities in full swing

The Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal is a roadmap towards the Members' vision of a renewed and strengthened FAO. Reform of the programming and budgeting process with the full and integrated introduction of **results-based management** -- for Regular Programme and extrabudgetary activities -- is one of the top-priority items in the Plan. Boyd Haight, Director of Programme, Budget and Evaluation and leader for the results-based management project, offered these insights into the early stages of implementation.

"The Conference gave us vision, a compact, and a set of actions to renew FAO," said Haight. "It also gave us goals, objectives and a 'template' for presenting the results framework. We are now elaborating the organizational results, defining performance indicators, primary tools, and risks." Management's arrangements for implementing this aspect of the IPA are "designed to get results," said Haight. There is clear assignment of responsibility and accountability through project teams,

good communication and coordination with opportunities for user feedback, and a clear path to the senior management team for review and sign-off on policy issues.

Managing for results is a long-term, iterative learning process, linked to other reform projects such as improved human resource management, restructuring, and change in the organizational culture and mindset. Though the road is long, the first part of the journey is well under way and the early months of 2009 have seen a whirlwind of activity.

Early in the year, 13 interdisciplinary "strategy teams" were formed -- one for each of the Strategic Objectives and Functional Objectives -- with representatives from FAO offices around the world. These teams have been working to hammer out the elements for a new draft Strategic Framework, Medium-term Plan, and 2010-2011 Programme of Work and Budget. They will also be involved in setting up and using the results-based monitoring system that will be used beginning in 2010.

"The strategy teams are where the real action is," said Haight. "They are doing some extremely interesting work, particularly in their multidisciplinary approach. We initially formed the teams to work on formulation of the plans, but clearly there is a long-term institutional role for them." Each of the multidisciplinary strategy teams is headed by a senior officer. All told the teams involve more than 350 core members, nearly one-fourth of them from decentralized offices.

A systematic effort has been made to involve decentralized offices, beginning with a two-week workshop in December 2008 for Deputy Regional Representatives and Subregional Representatives. Similar consultations involving regional teams and FAO Representatives are planned for the weeks to come.

In the first two weeks of January, three kick-off meetings introduced staff to results-based management concepts, to prepare them to get involved in formulating the results frameworks. For the Strategic Objectives, two workshops plus team-level clinics were organized, taking an action-oriented, learn-by-doing approach. For the two Functional Objectives -- which provide the enabling environment for FAO's work -- extended workshops involving between 15 and 30 participants have been doing analogous work.

A "Results Marketplace", set for 11 March in the Headquarters Atrium, will allow the different strategy teams to view one another's preliminary results, share best practices and identify linkages and gaps. After the Marketplace event, preparation of budget proposals will get under way. Proposals will reflect the many lessons learned, as well as the scheme for Headquarters organizational structure.

IPA Trust Fund commitments climbing

To help finance the initial stages of change, the Conference established a Trust Fund to receive Members' extrabudgetary contributions with a provisional target of US\$ 21.8 million. To date, pledges and other forms of commitment from Members total US\$ 6,252,030, while funds actually received amount to US\$ 3,130,265. Some 17 members have promised contributions, and 12 of those have already effected payment.

David Benfield of the Reform Support Group expressed confidence that Trust Fund contributions will continue to rise. "The Finance Committee wants to make sure our costings are solid, which is fine," said Benfield. "I think we need to show progress on reform and the countries will join in." Benfield also noted that more than half of the actions specified in the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal can be carried out at no incremental cost.

As at 5 March 2009, the pledges and contributions picture looked like this:

Country	Pledged	Paid
AUSTRIA	65,933	65,933
BRAZIL	100,000	100,000
BELGIUM	250,000	
CYPRUS	9,186	9,186
ESTONIA	4,000	4,000
EC	1,200,000	
FRANCE	900,000	400,000
GERMANY	906,736	906,736
GREECE	86,338	86,338
ITALY	1,000,000	1,000,000
IRELAND	142,638	
MOZAMBIQUE	1,765	
NEW ZEALAND	70,000	70,000
SLOVAKIA	44,000	44,000
SPAIN	600,000	
SWITZERLAND	301,434	301,434
UNITED KINGDOM	570,000	

(all figures expressed in US dollars)

Progress in the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters

Much progress has been made by the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters, which is looking at all action items in the Immediate Plan of Action that require amendments to FAO's Constitution and other basic texts. During two meetings in February, the Committee endorsed proposed amendments concerning:

- procedures for election of the Director-General
- term of office of the Director-General (4 + 4 years)
- reporting lines for technical committees (to Conference on policy and regulatory matters, to Council on programme and budget matters)
- procedures for convening Ministerial-level meetings
- a common set of rules for Regional Conferences, giving these bodies an enhanced role in governance
- actions regarding the future status and composition of the Programme and Finance committees
- delegation of authority by the Director-General.

The Committee will have a further two sessions during May 2009, where it will deal with a number of other issues, including the new budgeting process and the functions of the Independent Chair of the Council.

Permanent Representatives increasingly log on to new Web site

Traffic to the new Web site for FAO Permanent Representatives is increasing steadily, according to the Conference, Council and Protocol Affairs Division which manages the site. Launched in October 2008, the site provides each Permanent Representative with a password-protected "in box" for communication with the FAO secretariat. Also offered: a dynamic meetings calendar, reference information not available on the public FAO Web site, convenient links, news of Regional Group activities, FAO news releases and more. A recent poll, conducted through the site, revealed that 80 percent of users could easily find the information they were looking for.

Comments? Suggestions? Write to Members-Update@fao.org.