

**Address by the Director-General to the Joint Meeting of  
CoC-IEE Working Groups I, II and III  
at 09:30, 15 September 2008**

***Intensive process so far and commitment***

1. At the outset, let me commend the commitment shown by Members to undertake an in-depth analysis of the IEE's findings and recommendations. I am increasingly confident that your hard work in preparing the Immediate Plan of Action will be seen as a landmark in making our Organization better and stronger.
2. Likewise, I am equally committed to further reform through an agreed Immediate Plan of Action. I appreciated your having asked management to take a more proactive role in contributing to your discussions. We have prepared many written inputs and given substantive presentations. You have had many interactions with the Deputy Director-General, many Senior Managers and my Representatives to your Groups. I am heartened by the feedback you have given me on our participation.
3. I am pleased at the rising confidence that this process has engendered, that Members and management can and will work together to ensure a positive and workable outcome of this exercise – one that is absolutely essential and that will set the future course for the work of our Organization.
4. To work toward the vision of a world free from hunger and malnutrition, FAO must be fit to address the challenges and opportunities we face, such as the global food price crisis, to which I have given great attention these past months. Let me assure you that I have given equal priority to ensuring the adequacy of the structures to support the IEE follow-up process and have been fully engaged in providing policy advice on management's contributions to your discussions.
5. Members and management share the same overall aspirations for FAO. To lay the final foundations for a successful Conference in November, we can build on our fruitful engagement and common understanding achieved in these past months. I appreciate that this has required give and take – compromises here and there. This is inevitable, as complex challenges do not have a single solution. In the critical weeks ahead it will be essential that this spirit continues on all sides. You may be assured of my categorical support to your final phase of preparations of an agreed Immediate Plan of Action.

***Substantial progress made***

6. We have followed with interest your discussions in Working Group 2, to improve and streamline the governance process.
7. The Working Groups have provided excellent guidance on a new planning framework. This framework will help management fulfil its responsibility to deliver demonstrable and focused organizational results under clearly defined strategic objectives using all the resources - assessed and voluntary contributions - put at our disposal.

8. To achieve our objectives, we will require further changes to the way we do business, building on the reform we set in motion three years ago. More can and will be done and we support the principle of being accountable for measurable improvements in management and administration.

### ***Early actions this year and key areas for 2009***

9. Many early actions have been initiated since late 2007, and I will ensure that these are well communicated - so as to also facilitate your transmitting this information to your capitals. But 2009 will mark a real milestone in the commencement of implementation of a Conference-agreed Immediate Plan of Action.
10. A key process that must be undertaken in 2009 is the finalization of the new Strategic Framework and Medium Term Plan based on the elements approved by the 2008 Conference. Preparation of the Programme of Work and Budget 2010-11 will pose a special challenge. It will have to present a costed plan under the new programme and organizational structure, and integrate resources from all sources of funds. These plans will have to be considered by Members through the governance mechanisms you decide to put in place, leading to approval by the Conference in 2009.
11. Further opportunities will be created by the detailed analysis being undertaken through the Root and Branch Review. The expert firm we engaged will provide its first report later this month, outlining a possible new business model for FAO. This will set the stage for elaborating more improvements in processes and structures when implementing the Immediate Plan of Action. The recently established Change Team will also be a useful incubator and catalyst for change.
12. In any event, human resource management reforms will continue as a matter of priority – streamlined recruitment, performance management, rotation policy, training in results based management, to mention a few areas.

### ***The task immediately ahead for both Members and management***

13. An intense series of both formal and informal meetings among Members will take place in the coming weeks to iron out the contours of a positive outcome at the Special Conference.
14. I am pleased that discussion is scheduled to start immediately on the Special Conference Resolution which will authorize implementation of the Immediate Plan of Action so that Members have adequate time to agree a resolution by consensus.
15. More deliberation on the costing dimension of the Immediate Plan of Action is also required, and management stands ready to provide the necessary supportive information. It is essential that we earn your confidence that the costings and underlying assumptions are thorough. In this respect, we welcome the planned

further review of costs and funding options at the Finance Committee session next month.

16. I reiterate that I will not propose any increase of the Regular Programme budget in 2009. It will therefore be important to clarify as soon as possible the Immediate Plan of Action requirements to be met by extra-budgetary resources next year, so that we can work with members to shape consensual packages which could attract donor funding.
17. Management is committed to take all necessary actions to generate the potential savings identified in the Immediate Plan of Action. In the spirit of reform with growth, these savings will be ploughed back into technical programmes.

### ***Shaping an ambitious yet realistic IPA***

18. I am well aware of the enormity of the challenge that lies in 2009 – to implement all the change processes in the Immediate Plan of Action agreed by the Conference in November – as well as a sense of urgency for its implementation.
19. The plan will have to be ambitious yet realistic, and the sequencing of actions must be logical and focus on changes critical to sustained long-term reform. The plan must also have built-in flexibility as additional information becomes available, such as the outcome of the Root and Branch Review in 2009.
20. At the same time, we must proceed with the orderly implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget approved for this biennium. As you know, one of the issues already flagged by the Root and Branch Review consultants is the need to prioritize the many improvement projects planned or underway both by the IEE and in the present PWB.
21. A key aspect of successful change is also internal and external consultation and communication. The steps taken so far, like the establishment of an interactive new Intranet website and preparations of a communications strategy, are a start. The Joint Advisory Committee on FAO Reforms (JAC/FAR) and the Change Team will be important tools. But genuine participation of staff in a change process also requires the necessary time for consultations and buy-in to be built into our plans.
22. I share the concern of many Members about the capacity of the Organization to undertake such a far-reaching plan of change quickly. To assume that such a change can be done in a big bang is unrealistic, even if money was no constraint.
23. Let me be clear. This is not a question of procrastination. I acknowledge the need for continuing reforms urgently. But an Immediate Plan of Action is not a statement of aspirations. It has to be formulated as a package of specific outcomes that can be funded by members and implemented by the organization at an agreed cost and within defined timeframes. I sincerely hope that in the coming weeks, Members will help us in shaping commitments on which we can all deliver.

### ***In conclusion***

24. The IEE emphasized the importance of a “shared vision of FAO’s future work” based on the political resolve to achieve “reform and growth simultaneously in a unified interdependent package”. I am pleased to see this shared vision emerging from your intensive involvement in the IEE follow-up process. We are also pleased to have been given the opportunity to play our rightful part in this process, and we look forward to supporting your ongoing discussions in formulating a well-considered, ambitious yet realistic Immediate Plan of Action that can be endorsed by consensus.