



Presentation

by

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at the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa  
Cluster Meeting of Resident Representatives

Lomé, Togo, 10-14 April 2006

## I. Remarks on the FAO reform

Madam Chair,

First allow me to express my profound appreciation and that of the Organization that I represent, the FAO, to Mr. Gilbert Hounbo, Regional Director for UNDP Bureau for Africa, for the invitation extended to me to attend this meeting which has proved very useful. My comments on the UN Reform will be focused on the on-going FAO Reform as part of the UN family.

As one of the oldest UN Specialized Agencies, FAO needed, along with the whole UN system, to adapt to the changes taking place in the wider development cooperation environment, and thus respond better to the high expectations of its member countries (developed as well as developing countries). Along with other UN bodies, FAO needed to cut its overheads, speed up its responses, avoid duplication, drop activities which others can do better and strengthen its actions in areas in which it has an acknowledged comparative advantage. It is in this context that the

FAO Director General, Dr. Jacques Diouf, took the initiative to propose a reform of the Organization to FAO Council last November, in order to strengthen areas in which it has a clear comparative advantage and where strong action on its part is expected.

### *Main thrusts of the reforms*

The main thrust of FAO Reform are:

- cooperation with the United Nations system to help achieve the World Food Summit (WFS) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), beginning with the reduction of hunger and rural poverty;
- exchange and dissemination of knowledge by developing thematic knowledge networks and collecting information on best practices;
- activities to promote the agricultural sector and the fight against hunger and poverty, especially through alliances against hunger;
- consumer protection by applying quality and safety standards throughout the food chain.

The reforms should also facilitate and increase interdisciplinary work on horizontal subjects and programmes, including capacity building, gender equality, natural resources, climate change, sustainable development, research and extension.

### *Restructuring measures envisaged at FAO Headquarters*

The idea is to better match structures with major programmes. The departments in Rome will continue to work on global issues and to collect and process information. The proposal made at the November 2005 Conference included two new departments that will serve to undertake horizontal actions, to generate synergies and to encourage multidisciplinary activities. They should strengthen FAO's role in the collection, management and dissemination of information, especially for the building of capacity at country and regional levels. They would also be tasked with facilitating partnerships and alliances.

### *Reinforcement of decentralization*

The objective is to bring FAO's expertise and services closer to the member countries, in accordance with the recommendations of the Independent Evaluation of FAO's Decentralization conducted earlier. Accordingly,

- multidisciplinary teams will be put in place at the level of regional economic integration organizations to provide technical input, policy support and greater investment;
- FAO Representatives will have greater authority and direct access to operating resources. They will also be more directly involved in assistance activities in close cooperation with United Nations teams in the countries.

### *Measures for streamlining and greater efficiency*

The simplification and computerization of procedures, a broader delegation of authority and a reduction in clearance requirements should enable the Organization to be more efficient. Staff performance appraisal will be based more on results. Training and refresher courses will be organized. The hierarchical structure will be flattened, keeping the same number of assistant directors-general but seriously depleting the number of director posts.

### *Regular Programme funds future allocation*

As the Member Nations have repeatedly requested, inherited imbalances that existed in the distribution of Regular Programme funds will be addressed under the reform to enhance the operating capacity and flexibility of the Organization. As a result:

- the percentage of total budget resources allocated to staff will be reduced from 66 to 60 percent, with an overall reduction of 122 permanent posts;
- the number of national officers will be increased by 131 posts, which will be offset by a reduction of 85 international professional posts;
- the percentage of professional posts at Headquarters will fall from 70 to 60 percent, in favour of the decentralized offices;

- the percentage of other staff resources in the budget will increase from 17 to 21 percent, which will give the Organization greater room for manoeuvre in recruiting external specialists, as and when required;
- the ratio of general service to professional posts will fall from the current 1.25 to 1.09;
- the share of expenditures not related to human resources will increase from 34 to 40 percent. The funds thus made available for equipment, travel and operations will serve to improve the provision of services.

This exercise will be greatly facilitated by the freeze on recruitment that has been in effect since August 2005 and by expected retirements.

The FAO reform process acknowledged the need for strengthened decentralization. The FAO Conference authorized, as a first step, the implementation of the Director-General's reform proposals in one region and one additional sub region. The Director-General decided to begin with the African region, and the Central Asian Sub-region. For the Africa region, four sub-regional offices are being created, respectively in Central, Eastern, Western, and Southern Africa. The West Africa Sub-regional Office will be co-located with the Regional Office for Africa based in Accra (Ghana).

## II. Stronger Agency collaboration in the field

The FAO reform process acknowledges the priority that the Organization will give to strengthening cooperation with other UN bodies, both internationally and at the national level. It should foster the programmes of cooperation, undertaken within the framework of various FAO technical programmes, with other UN specialized agencies, funds and programmes.

The FAO reform provides the framework for coordinating its decentralized services to Members, for monitoring its contributions to the WFS and the MDG, for encouraging and facilitating development of further joint arrangements with other UN system organizations in various areas of common concern, and for forging, through the decentralized network, stronger links with regional and sub-regional organizations.

The reform also acknowledges the particular situation of the African Continent, where about 210 million people suffer chronic under nutrition<sup>1</sup>. In this connection, FAO is revisiting its priorities and will reorganize itself to improve its ability to address global problems of tremendous significance to farmers. This will include issues such as migratory pests like locusts, quelea birds and armyworms, which move in great numbers without respect for borders, destroying the crops that fall in their path leaving millions of hapless farmers deprived of their food supplies and livelihoods. Each year, the global economy loses billions of dollars because of crop and livestock diseases, many of which can be prevented at a relatively low cost. Helping countries apply the food standards generated through cooperation with the World Health Organization to protect consumers is a vital area of concentration. The development of international trade in agricultural products increasingly relies on these standards to ensure that national rules and regulations do not become technical barriers to market entry.

Increasingly frequent agricultural emergencies have shown the importance of coordinating an effective international response to periodic droughts and floods, hurricanes and tsunamis. There are also serious public concerns about the potentially catastrophic effects of diseases such as Avian Influenza, which has now been declared in African countries, with destructive socio-economic impact on the livelihood of affected farmers.

Indeed, FAO's advocacy to raise the profile of the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors needs to be carried out not only in its own fora, but also through continued participation in meetings of these other bodies, if it is to convey the message convincingly to decision-makers outside the specific realm of FAO's traditional counterpart ministries. These actions need to be complemented by involvement in policy dialogue and support at the national levels, in the context of a coherent UN system approach facilitated by Country Teams and the Resident Coordination system.

At the Sub-regional and regional levels, FAO will contribute to UN efforts to provide support to regional economic organizations and continental bodies like the African Union and the NEPAD

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<sup>1</sup> 2000-2002 data.

Secretariat in implementing major programmes such as the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).

Within the framework of the revised priorities, Agency collaboration in the field would be strengthened through:

- cooperation with the United Nations system to help achieve the WFS and the MDGs, beginning with the goal of reducing by half the incidence of hunger by 2015 (MDG 1) which is the aim of the FAO Special Programme for Food Security at national and regional level and its emphasis on investment in the harnessing of water, in infrastructure and in the processing, packaging and marketing of agricultural commodities. Assistance for the recovery of production capacity after disasters together with the prevention of new disasters and a reduction in their consequences, is also part of this objective;
- activities that promote the agricultural sector and the fight against hunger and poverty, especially through alliances against hunger;
- exchange and dissemination of knowledge by developing thematic knowledge networks and collecting information on best practices;
- consumer protection by applying quality and safety standards throughout the food chain;
- Strengthened participation in UNDAF<sup>2</sup> and PRSP<sup>3</sup> processes through the National Medium Term Priority Framework (NMTPF) process put forward in FAO Director General's reform proposals. The NMTPF Initiative should help ensuring optimal merging and bridging of FAO priority actions within UNDAF joint planning, with a view of improving country strategic planning-programming.

FAO's participation in the UN Common Country Programming Process is indeed an important step in pursuing new and innovative approaches to implement the general consensus reached on the need for greater national ownership and leadership of development processes as well as for greater harmonization and alignment of donor programmes. FAO is committed to ensuring that

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Development Assistance Framework

<sup>3</sup> Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.

the Organization remains fully involved and contributes in its areas of competence, in close collaboration and coordination with its UN partners.

The UN Common Country Programming process is an example of trends in fostering harmonization and simplification of donor policies and processes which will greatly influence future resource mobilization possibilities.