



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations



## FIRST GLOBAL Working Conference of FAO Representatives

### Concept note

12-14 December 2023

The First Global Working Conference of FAO Representatives (FAORs) 2023 is being convened to provide a platform for dialogue between the Director-General and FAO Representatives (FAORs) as well as the Core Leadership and the Senior Management Team, on the principal opportunities and challenges facing the Organization at the outset of the Director-General's second mandate.

FAORs, appointed by the Director-General and accredited in their respective designated country/ies of representation, represent the Organization and the Director-General in their country/ies of assignment. They manage and are accountable for the delivery of FAO's programme and core functions at country level, providing leadership in securing the effective application of such key functions as advocacy, partnership, policy development, technical cooperation, representation as well as administration and management. Consequently, they are at the frontline of FAO's support to its Members on the ground.

As FAO repositions itself based on the principles of the 4Rs (recovery, reform, rebuild and renaissance) to ensure that its Members be effectively engaged to accelerate the transformation of their agrifood systems so as to make substantive progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, it is becoming increasingly evident that the Organization should work as one across the globe to address successfully the complex challenges amidst the rapidly evolving development narrative. Ensuring greater alignment and a concerted approach between headquarters and the Decentralized Offices is pivotal in this endeavour. It is important that the Organization as a whole be able to leverage its capacities and optimize its capabilities across the regions to attain the objectives outlined in the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, underpinned by the guiding vision of the Four Betters (better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life). Moreover, safeguarding operational modalities and policy frameworks that enable Country Offices to be responsive to the needs of Members and to deliver in a timely manner the requisite assistance and programmes is equally crucial.

In this context, the Global Working Conference represents an excellent opportunity for FAORs to voice their ideas and be engaged in discussions aimed at reinforcing the manner in which FAO can realize its vision of placing countries at the centre of the Organization's work.

## Objectives

Within this framework, the principal objectives of the Global Working Conference would be to provide a forum for a constructive and meaningful two-way dialogue that would be conducive to eliciting active feedback on the issues as well as potential opportunities, aimed at:

1. ensuring a common understanding of the Director-General's established strategic vision for his next four-year term for the successful delivery of the Strategic Framework 2022-31;
2. ensuring FAORs have adequate guidance for planning and implementing of their Country Programming Frameworks;
3. establishing a dialogue among FAORs and Senior Management to share knowledge and on-the-ground innovative practices and solutions to improve performance of FAO Representations;
4. providing a unique opportunity for Members to gather in one common place with all FAORs; and
5. allowing engagement and networking opportunities between FAORs, senior staff and employees, including through participation in the Employee Recognition Awards and the 25 Year Medal Ceremony..

## Expected Outcomes

At the end of the Global Working Conference, the discussions will be summarized in a final report outlining the principal issues, suggestions and proposals stemming from the strategic dialogue guidance as well as a high-level action plan, comprising specific follow-up measures that would need to be undertaken by the respective offices and business process owners.

The recommendations and proposed measures emanating from the Global Working Conference will inform and contribute towards finalizing of the corporate reflections on the ongoing initiatives aimed at strengthening the Decentralized Offices Network and FAO Representations, namely the Optimal Staffing Model and technical capacity coverage framework that would underpin the Country Offices Transformation (COT) and render them fit for purpose for the forthcoming years.

It is envisaged that, subject to the concurrence of the Director-General and confirmation by the Core Leadership and participants that the gathering and related dialogue and outcome are constructive and beneficial, consideration be given to instituting the Global Working Conference as a recurrent meeting to be held once every biennium/two years.

## Structure and Methodology

The Global Working Conference will be comprised of two days of sessions held in the format of both plenary deliberations and breakout group discussions in FAO headquarters and a third day for a field visit near Rome.

The proposed programme of sessions over the two days is structured in four parts, commencing with an **introductory or framing segment**, which will take place on the first day and which will seek to highlight the Director-General's strategic vision for his next four-year term for the successful delivery of the Strategic Framework 2022-31 and provide an opportunity for the participants to take stock of the global priorities and present challenges as identified by an inspirational keynote speaker and from national stakeholders at Ministerial level. This segment will also provide an opportunity for the FAORs to share their own insights on these matters as well as on the opportunities available to and issues being faced by Country Offices.

The opening segment will be followed by a segment to delve into the dimensions of **positioning FAO** to better assist its Members. This second segment will cover not only the elements aimed at the modalities for securing a greater linkage between the Strategic Framework and the Country Programming Frameworks, but also on how FAO can position itself within the context of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework to leverage effectively its value proposition and its comparative advantage. It will further look at the proposed systems approach, which is being considered to catalyse and accelerate the transformation of agrifood systems to derive the desired impact and progress towards the attainment of the SDGs in the quest of realizing the 2030 Agenda.

The third segment of the Global Working Conference will focus on **enhancing management and operational modalities** to render them, on the one hand, more apt and commensurate with the operational needs at field level and, on the other hand, facilitate the repositioning of FAO at country level. The sessions under this segment will be complemented by the concluding segment which will focus on the **Way Forward**, notably with respect to the development of staffing models of Decentralized Offices, as well as the preparations for the Regional Conferences to be held in 2024.

The sessions will be conducted in a manner to allow for substantial interactive exchanges. Accordingly, they will be structured to allow for more time to be allotted to hearing directly from the FAORs on their experiences as well as on the elements required to enable them to successfully deliver on their responsibilities at country level. In this respect, presentations made in each of the sessions should not exceed ten (10) minutes, leaving a substantial portion of each session for group discussions and/or plenary exchange with a view to gathering feedback and inputs from the FAORs. The programme includes breakout discussions with groups based on representation typologies from across the regions, which will be held in various FAO meeting rooms that have been reserved for the Global Working Conference.

In this respect, the structure of the sessions will consist of the following:

- each session will have a brief presentation at the outset (not to exceed ten [10] minutes) followed by a 'Question and Answer' segment;
- each session will be facilitated by external and internal facilitators;
- each breakout group will be led by the relevant headquarters units;
- in each session, a case history will be presented by a designated FAOR;
- a rapporteur will be designated to summarize the discussions, which will be shared subsequently with all participants.

As the Global Working Conference will be convened in conjunction with the Employee Recognition Awards for 2023, the FAORs will have the opportunity to participate in the Employee Recognition Awards being held in the afternoon of 14 December 2023.

Given the heavy schedule of meetings being arranged for Tuesday, 12 December and Wednesday, 13 December and in recognition that the Global Working Conference provides a valuable opportunity for colleagues from Decentralized Offices to engage in person with colleagues at headquarters, FAORs and senior-level staff from Decentralized Offices may wish to consider organizing their respective travel arrangements in a manner that would allow them to arrange bilateral meetings with senior managers and other colleagues based at headquarters, if desired and deemed useful, on Friday, 15 December 2023.

In preparation for the Global Working Conference, the coordination team tasked with its preparation, in coordination with the offices/business process owners concerned, will transmit a questionnaire to all FAORs to solicit their views and expectations from the sessions. Furthermore, in consultation with the FAORs, the team will establish the various cluster groupings for the breakout sessions and designate FAORs for presenting case histories in each of the sessions. The preparations will also be undertaken in consultation with the designated lead divisions/business process owners for each session.

### **Participants in the Global Working Conference**

All FAO Representatives (officially accredited to countries and staff members serving as FAORs ad interim), as well as Assistant Directors-General/Regional Representatives, Deputy Regional Representatives, Regional Programme Leaders, Subregional Coordinators and Liaison Office Directors, will be invited to participate in the Global Working Conference. Core Leadership, Division Directors and pertinent staff will be invited to specific sessions as required.