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COUNCIL

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STATUS OF FAO ENGAGEMENT IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM REFORMS

I. THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF UN REFORM

1. In the 2005 World Summit Outcome, the UN Secretary-General was invited “to launch work to further strengthen the management and coordination of United Nations operational activities so that they can make an even more effective contribution to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including proposals for consideration by Member States for more tightly managed entities in the fields of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.” This led to the establishment by the UN Secretary-General of the High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment (HLP).

2. The report of the HLP was launched on 9 November 2006 and was issued as a General Assembly document with a covering note from the SG on 20 November 2006. In his covering note, the Secretary-General stated “I have decided to move forward on some of these recommendations, especially since many build on reforms and initiatives that are already being carried out by the executive heads of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.” He subsequently identified these as: the One Country Programme Pilots, a consolidated UN gender architecture, improvements to business practices and a review of the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

3. A report of the present Secretary-General, containing his proposals on the HLP report, was submitted to the General Assembly in April 2007. This will allow the General Assembly to proceed with its formal consideration of the report. In his report, the Secretary-General clarifies that the report of the High-Level Panel should be considered within the context of a number of on-going reform processes and takes note of advanced discussions among the Rome-based agencies on food security.

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II. THE ONE UN PILOTS

4. With regard to “*the establishment of five pilot One Country Programmes*”, the note of the former Secretary-General specified that certain countries had already expressed an interest in being among the pilot countries, and that “*a process was underway for determining appropriate criteria to carefully select them*”; that to “*maximize results, we will need to ensure that the One Country Programme is piloted in countries at different stages of development*” and that “*Well designed Country Programmes...and executed pilot programmes, based on the principle of country ownership, will provide the basis for further developing and expanding the One United Nations approach...*”.

5. The Secretary-General entrusted to the Administrator of UNDP, as Chair of the UN Development Group (UNDG), the task of taking forward the Pilots, which became eight (Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam) and are now referred to as the “One-UN” Pilots. Two of the Pilots were already initiated under the Joint Office Pilot initiative (Cape Verde and Viet Nam), which was based on previous reforms endorsed by the General Assembly. Selection criteria for the eight Pilot countries were not collectively agreed.

III. CHALLENGES FOR THE PILOTS: ASPECTS TO TEST

6. FAO is participating in the One-UN Pilot initiative in countries where governments asked to become Pilots and in order to test, together with other concerned organizations, different approaches that enable the UN System to engage in more joined-up and cost-effective ways of working at country level, including (i) those that seek to enable greater country ownership and leadership of national development processes; (ii) those that tailor UN coordination modalities to differing country capacity; (iii) substantive result-oriented modalities for joint activities; (iv) the use of the cluster or thematic approach, already used in humanitarian assistance (that could also be used to test innovative cooperation among the Rome-based UN system entities); and (v) approaches to identify how the UN system relates and contributes to the new aid architecture, which exists in a number of the Pilot countries, e.g. Budget Support, Joint Assistance Strategy, Sector-Wide Approaches and overall harmonisation and alignment.

7. It will also be important to test approaches that are more inclusive of the capacities and activities of UN specialized agencies with field presence, including: (a) the close linkages between their knowledge/normative and operational functions; (b) cooperation with extra-UN entities (World Bank, regional development banks, NGOs); (c) their technical policy advice that remains of interest to countries that have or are graduating to middle income status; and (d) their regional activities that respond to trends towards greater economic integration or transboundary threats/challenges (locust, avian influenza, sustainable management of transboundary natural resources). Currently, few of these form part of the main UN system programming tool, the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs), which has so far often been a compilation of the country programmes of UN funds and programmes (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP) but is expected to become the main basis for the One Country Programmes.

8. The country Pilots will also explore: (1) how possible joint activities by FAO, UNIDO, IFAD, WFP, ILO and others can support national priorities within the context of One Country Programme, (2) how they would tap pooled funding and generally form part of the One-UN at country level, (3) how to better balance social and economic national priorities within UNDAF, (4) how more strengthened forms of leadership (of a Resident Coordinator or UN Representative) would move in tandem with the resolution of the potential conflict of interest within UNDP, in view of the roles it already performs on behalf of the UN system and those it performs on its own behalf, and (5) how best to ensure utilization of the capacity of the entire UN system.

9. Against this background of the complexity of the One UN Pilots, the FAO Secretariat has called for inter-agency agreement on evaluation of the Pilots, underlining the urgent need for setting baselines and benchmarking. It has proposed that UN Evaluation Group, which groups the

heads of UN system evaluation units, be made responsible for organizing this evaluation. The formative initial evaluation of the Pilots, followed-up by evaluation of experience after some three years, should provide evidence on the viability of the test pilots for broader replication; it could also contribute to decision-making on UN reform by competent intergovernmental bodies.

IV. FAO ENGAGEMENT

10. At global level, the FAO Secretariat is fully engaged in the work of inter-agency mechanisms supporting the eight pilots. These include UNDG mechanisms on: the Joint Office and One-UN Pilots, Programme and Management Groups and their relevant subsidiary mechanisms, as well as a new mechanism at Assistant Secretary-General/Assistant Director-General level, the Support Committee, created to provide oversight to the Pilots. The CEB and its High Level Committees on Programmes (HLCP) and Management (HLCM) are also seized with the eight Pilots and their evaluation.

11. In seven of the 'One UN' pilots, FAO has a fully-fledged representation and is participating in meetings/discussions on the Pilots. Albania is the only Pilot country where FAO is a Non-Resident Agency (NRA), with a national correspondent assuring liaison with government and UN system entities, supported by the Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) in the reconfigured Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe. With the launch of the 'One UN' pilots in early 2007, 'roadmaps' towards 'One UN' including One Programme, One Leader, One Budget, and One Office, have been discussed or further elaborated at the country level. The *process of conceptualization of 'One UN'* has started from a different basis in each of the eight countries. FAO has been closely involved in these processes, albeit on a more limited basis in Albania.

12. FAO capacity to respond to the requirements of UN reform is being strengthened by measures implemented in response to the Independent Evaluation of FAO's Decentralization and the FAO Reform. Related changes include the introduction of a new operating model and delegation of administrative, budgetary and programme responsibilities to the FAO Representatives (FAORs). The subregional MDTs, composed of technical officers including the FAORs in the subregion, will facilitate the transfer of best practices and assist in promoting capacities to respond to trans-boundary and global public goods. Their role in advising countries on aspects of the Pilots will be important.

13. Formulation or revision of the National Medium Term Priority Frameworks (NMTPFs) in the Pilot countries is being accelerated to facilitate FAO participation in One Plan/One Programme formulation, with subregional MDTs fully involved in this process.

14. FAO held a consultation in Rome in January 2007 with FAORs from a number of the Pilot countries (Mozambique, Pakistan, United Republic of Tanzania and Viet Nam) and concerned Headquarters staff to examine implications, responsibilities and action for FAO of UN Reforms, with particular reference to the concept of 'One UN' at the country level.

15. As its country offices tend to be small, FAO participation in the 'One UN' pilots will require additional resources, on a transitional basis, to enable these offices to participate in change management, programming and to ensure support from FAO subregional, regional and headquarters offices, as necessary. Due to constraints on the Regular Programme budget this biennium, extrabudgetary resources are being mobilized for this purpose.

16. Funding is at present a key constraint, as funding through various modalities selected by donors has so far not resulted in funds flowing to many UN system organizations at country level, nor is there a clear understanding of the funding available and how it is to be accessed. Some donors will channel funds to UNDG, a MDG-related fund, a country level transition fund and directly to UN system organizations.

17. With regard to improved business practices, called for in the HLP report, the FAO Secretariat participated in the March 2007 session of the HLCM, which considered a proposal for

a system-wide response in this area. The Committee agreed to develop a detailed, sequenced and costed plan of action for implementation. The plan of action would be developed with the assistance of a Steering Committee and submitted to the HLCM for approval in the fall of 2007.

18. Country specific information is provided in **Annex 1**.

V. NEXT STEPS

19. FAO is fully cognizant of the potential benefits of UN reform that include retaining relevance and effectiveness in a changing external environment. FAO is committed to working with others to heighten impact, address complex, multidimensional challenges and reduce costs. It will therefore be participating in the eight One-UN Pilots and contributing to their design and implementation.

20. FAO will implement the reforms contained in GA Resolution 59/250 “Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System” (TCPR), as called for by the FAO Conference resolution 13/2005 on the TCPR. A report thereon will be presented to the FAO Conference in November 2007. The FAO Secretariat is closely collaborating with UNDG and its subsidiary mechanisms in this regard. FAO will also implement, in accordance with guidance received from its governing bodies, those reforms that will emerge from intergovernmental consideration of the HLP report and the report of the Independent External Evaluation, building on reforms proposed by the FAO Director-General that have already been endorsed by FAO governing bodies and that are now under implementation.

21. GA Resolution 59/250 on the TCPR, adopted in 2004, has provided thus far the main legislative basis for UN system reform at country level. A new TCPR is under preparation. The UN Economic and Social Council will consider a preliminary version of this TCPR, without specific recommendations, at its Substantive Session in July 2007. Negotiation and final endorsement of a TCPR resolution is expected to take place at the General Assembly towards November-December 2007.

22. Initial preparations of the TCPR 2007, as well as the HLP report, give greater attention to specialized agencies in the context of UN reform than has been the case in the past. It will be important that the unique contributions of these agencies to the support delivered by the system as a whole, and adequate means to enable these contributions, are taken into account in designing, implementing and evaluating UN reforms that may emanate from intergovernmental guidance on the HLP report and the TCPR 2007. Only if the entire capacity of the UN system is fully mobilized, will the aspiration of “Delivering as One” be realized.

23. As developments relating to intergovernmental consideration of UN reform and FAO involvement in the Pilots will evolve over the year, the FAO Secretariat will endeavour to keep FAO governing bodies and the Membership fully informed, including through the seminar on UN reform for FAO Permanent Representatives taking place at the FAO Headquarters Atrium on 13 June 2007. This Council document will be made available to the FAO Programme Committee at its ninety-seventh session in May 2007.

ANNEX 1

A. COUNTRY SPECIFIC INFORMATION*Albania*

24. FAO has had, as a Non Resident Agency (NRA), a limited input into the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Currently, a National Medium Term Priority Framework (NMTPF) formulation process is scheduled for June-July 2007. Albania will provide an opportunity to test the advantages and disadvantages, as well as the opportunities and challenges, of FAO involvement in the One-UN Pilots, as a Non Resident Agency.

Cape Verde

25. FAO and WHO participated in the formulation of the UNDAF. In the context of the 'One UN', given the existence of a United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP), FAO, WHO and NRAs (based mainly in Dakar), are discussing how to include their activities in an expanded One Plan/One Programme. FAO had signed the UNDAF when it was developed.

Mozambique

26. FAO is coordinating the preparation of the Economic Pillar of an UNDAF-PLUS, which tries to ensure broader involvement of UN specialized agencies and UN programmes in support of national economic development priorities that were absent in the UNDAF. Entities that were absent in the original UNDAF, are now actively participating (IFAD, UN-Habitat, UNEP, ILO and UNCTAD).

Pakistan

27. FAO has started a NMTPF process in Pakistan, together with the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (MINFAL). The next steps include a further round of consultations with government and other stakeholders at the country level to agree on areas where FAO could assist over the medium term, which in turn should feed into formulation of the 'One Plan', within the timetable set by the UN Country Team (UNCT).

Rwanda

28. Agriculture/rural development, which is a main national priority of Rwanda (agriculture employs 90% of the population and accounts for some 41% of GNP), is not part of the UNDAF. It is not entirely clear how FAO, IFAD and UNIDO joint support on agriculture-related issues, might relate to the One Programme. UNDAF priorities include health, education, environment, social protection and governance.

United Republic of Tanzania

29. Based on the UNDAF, five new Joint Programmes are being developed through cluster working groups, which will be components of the One UN Programme, to be discussed with the GOT and the Donor Partner Group. FAO participates fully in Cluster 1 focusing on income generation, competitiveness, food security and employment. FAO is also a member of the Steering Committee, which will guide the One UN Programme process.

Uruguay

30. FAO has initiated the preparation of the NMTPF to be better positioned to feed into the One Programme. Three cluster working groups were established in February 2007 to start work on developing Joint Programmes, which will be components of the One UN Programme. FAO participates in Cluster working group 1 focusing on economic development, private sector, environment and climate change, and gender equality.

Viet Nam

31. FAO is moving towards full participation in this Pilot (signing a Letter of Intent, contributions to One Programme and development of joint programmes). It already participates in the joint programme on Avian Influenza and is joining joint programmes on gender and on vulnerable population groups in mountainous areas of the central region. It is also formulating a joint programme on support to rural livelihoods based on the successful experience of FAO/Government of Viet Nam with farmer field schools on rural development.