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Review of the Decentralized Offices Network of FAO

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1. A modern and efficient FAO Decentralized Offices Network is key to support countries in reaching their targets for the Sustainable Development Goals.
2. In 2020-21, FAO embarked upon a focused effort to address the efficiency and effectiveness of the business models of Decentralized Offices, in line with the restructuring of headquarters units and to support the implementation of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31. Specific actions in this regard included: (i) Abolition in 2020 of the Office of Support to Decentralized Offices (OSD) at Headquarters to strengthen the integration of Decentralized Offices in the structure and management of the Organization in the spirit of One FAO and pursue the empowerment of Regional offices ; (ii) a rethink of the organizational structure of Regional Offices and Subregional Offices as an integral part of Regional Offices; and (iii) Launching of the Country Office Management and Monitoring Indicators Tool (COMMIT) - a Management information system tool to support more effective oversight capacity to assess Decentralized Offices performance and delivery on programme implementation.
3. The Restructuring of Regional and Subregional Offices was completed in 2022. The Regional Office structures have been aligned with the new headquarters' model and with the view to improve relevance, timeliness, cost-efficiency, technical quality, and effectiveness of the support which Regional and Subregional Offices, through Country Offices, provide to Members. This restructuring (budget and post neutral) followed the principles of One FAO, under a collegial leadership including the Subregional Coordinators to provide integrated policy advice through technical and investment support teams using virtual networks and achieving an improved, interactive regional governance.
4. The transformation of the regional structures implied changes in the business model with more integration between regions and subregions, thinking together, planning together, acting together, and achieving results together. It enabled the integration of Subregional Offices as part of the region, with a customized structure to respond to the specific regional and subregional contexts and the needs and capacities of each Regional and Subregional Office. The new structures of Subregional Offices include capacities for strategic thinking and foresight, multidisciplinary technical support, leveraging partnerships and liaison functions, improving oversight and management functions, introducing more client-oriented services for administrative and operations support through promotion of vertical integration and strengthened support services, with the Regional Office or Shared Service Centre, and finally the adoption of a more effective and efficient administration moving towards a digital FAO in all locations.
5. To deliver successfully under the Strategic Framework 2022-31, FAO Country Offices need to position themselves strategically within the UN system in responding collectively to aspirations of countries in the attainment of the SDGs while fully observing international standards of accountability, internal control and good management.
6. To address the evolving context and the challenges and gaps identified, documents are being prepared for the 2024 Regional Conferences which include proposed measures which seek to provide Country Offices with:
 - i. a renewed business model, better reflecting country contexts based on agreed principles and criteria;
 - ii. increased flexibility via a strategic adjustment in staffing profiles funded through the Regular Programme (RP), along with the enhanced allocation of non-earmarked resources ('general operating expenses'); and,
 - iii. increased agility through a share of resources being pooled at regional level, enabling a more targeted and effective response to specific country-level needs.
7. As per the usual planning process, the outcomes of the Regional Conferences will be reported to the Programme Committee in 2024 in preparation for the Medium Term Plan 2026-29 and Programme of Work and Budget 2026-27.