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FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Thirty-eighth Session

Georgetown, Guyana, 11-13 March and 18-21 March 2024

**Country Office Network – Current Status and Way Forward:
A policy paper**

Executive summary

The effectiveness of FAO's assistance to countries in reaching their 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development targets is linked to the Organization's ability to make the best use of available resources and deliver at scale at country level through a modern and efficient FAO Decentralized Offices Network, allowing the Organization to respond to the aspirations of countries in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and to observe international standards of accountability, internal control and good management.

Over the past years, the FAO Governing Bodies, starting with the Regional Conferences, have provided guidance on the Decentralized Offices Network transformation, to ensure greater flexibility and efficiency in the use of the Organization's financial and human resources to better respond to Members' expectations, on a cost-neutral basis and without negatively impacting the technical capacity at headquarters.

This document responds to guidance from the Governing Bodies to strengthen the Organization's work at country level and proposes measures to address current challenges, prioritizing and tailoring support to the specific needs of countries. In so doing, the overarching principles guiding the adjustment of FAO's country presence are that:

- (a) the proposed approach and resource allocations are tailored to countries' evolution, specificities, capacities and needs;
- (b) flexibility, improved agility (including through pooling of resources) and strengthened capacity (structure and resources) are built in;
- (c) office staffing structures reflect modern ways of operating and delivering, with an improved balance between staff and non-staff resources and with due attention to internal controls;
- (d) changes are to be implemented in a progressive manner including taking into account current staffing; and
- (e) the proposed adjustments do not negatively impact the regional budgetary allocation to the FAO Representation Network.

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org.

Further details on the proposed adjustments for the Latin America and the Caribbean region are presented in the document.

Suggested action by the Regional Conference

The Regional Conference is invited to:

- (a) provide feedback and guidance on the proposed measures presented to the 38th Session of the Regional Conference for Latin America and Caribbean (LARC 38) to adjust the FAO Country Offices Network to better respond to Members' expectations for FAO support and delivery under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31 in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and beyond;
- (b) express, in principle, support to the set of proposals outlined in this document; and
- (c) request Management to proceed with a transparent process of consultations with countries for the progressive implementation of the proposed arrangements.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

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I. INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

1. A modern and efficient FAO Decentralized Offices Network is key to support countries in reaching their targets for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). FAO supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems for *better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and a better life*, leaving no one behind. To deliver successfully under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022–31, FAO Country Offices need to position themselves strategically within the United Nations (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 in adherence to the FAO Basic Texts.

2. FAO Governing Bodies have provided guidance over the past years on the FAO Decentralized Offices Network, including:

- (a) In June 2016, the 154th Session of the FAO Council endorsed the region-specific recommendations arising from each of the 2016 sessions of the Regional Conferences, including the creation of new offices or the support for strengthening of existing capacities on a cost-neutral basis, ideally on a cost-sharing agreement with the host government concerned.¹
- (b) The FAO Council at its 163rd Session (December 2019) noted the need for the strengthening of the work of Decentralized Offices without negatively impacting the technical capacity at headquarters.²
- (c) The 42nd session of the FAO Conference (2021) endorsed the reports of the 2020 sessions of the Regional Conferences, including the specific guidance from the Report of the 36th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the

¹ CL 154/REP, paragraph 18b)

² CL 163/REP, paragraph 10 a) ii

Caribbean (LARC/20/REP)³ to “review the structure of the country office network to optimize the presence of the Organization at national level”.

3. During 2020–2022, FAO embarked upon a focused effort to address the efficiency and effectiveness of Decentralized Offices. Specific actions included *inter alia*: (i) better integration of Decentralized Offices into the corporate structure and further empowerment of Regional Offices in their oversight, in conformity with One FAO; and (ii) a revamped organizational structure of Regional and Subregional Offices (overview summary shown in Annex 1).

4. This document responds to the aforementioned guidance with focus now placed on FAO Representations and other Country Office modalities, to strengthen the Organization’s work at country level in the implementation of the Strategic Framework 2022–31 and to better respond to countries’ needs to achieve the SDGs. The document presents proposed measures to address current challenges, prioritizing and tailoring support to meet the specific needs of countries, considering the evolving context of operations.

5. The Regional Conference is invited to reflect on the proposals in this document. Following endorsement in principle, a transparent process of consultation, with due consideration to current realities regarding staffing and resources, will be undertaken, leading to the elaboration of an implementation road map of the proposed arrangements.

II. BACKGROUND

6. FAO Decentralized Offices were established pursuant to Article X, paragraphs 1 and 2, of the FAO Constitution which respectively state: “There shall be such regional offices and subregional offices as the Director-General, with the approval of the Conference, may decide.” and “The Director-General may appoint officials for liaison with particular countries or areas, subject to agreement of the government concerned.”⁴

7. The first Decentralized Offices of FAO were the five Regional Offices which opened between 1952 and 1961.⁵ The establishment of full-fledged FAO Representations (i.e. those offices where the function of an FAO Representative [FAOR] has been officially agreed with the host government through a signed host country agreement [HCA]) was initially approved by the FAO Council at its 69th Session in 1976.⁶ The establishment of Subregional Offices was endorsed by the FAO Council at its 106th Session⁷ in 1994. Over the years, FAO slowly built up the Decentralized Offices Network with currently 144 FAO Representations, with the most recent full-fledged office established in South Sudan in 2013.

8. In the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, the Regional Office was established in Santiago de Chile in 1952, with the Subregional Office for the Caribbean, in Bridgetown, in 1996, and the Subregional Office for Mesoamerica, in Panama City, in 2007. Over the years, 18 full-fledged FAO Representations have been established in the LAC region, the first in Colombia (1977) and the most recent in Paraguay (2002).

9. As shown in the table below, other modalities of country coverage in the LAC region include three countries where the representation is co-located in the Regional Office (RO) or Subregional

³ LARC/20/REP, page19 subparagraph c)”. <https://www.fao.org/3/ne267en/ne267en.pdf#page=19>

⁴ FAO Basic Texts (2017 edition), Volume I. A, page 10

⁵ 1952 in Latin America and the Caribbean, and Near East and North Africa; 1956 in Asia and the Pacific (to note that the Regional Office for Asia and the Far East was first temporarily opened in China in 1947. Through a decision of the Governing Bodies, in 1948, the office moved to its present location in Bangkok, which subsequently became its permanent site in 1953, while the HCA was officially signed in 1959); 1959 in Africa; 1961 in Europe and Central Asia (to note that the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia was established initially in Geneva in 1961 until 1970 and re-established officially through HCA in Budapest in 2007).

⁶ CL 69/REP, paragraphs 26-29

⁷ CL 106/REP, paragraph 34

Office (SRO), two Partnership and Liaison Offices, and ten countries covered through multiple accreditations.

Table 1
Modalities of FAO’s presence at country level – Latin America and the Caribbean region (2023)

FAO country coverage modalities in the Latin America and the Caribbean region	# of countries	% of total
Full-fledged FAO Representation	18	54
Partnership and Liaison Office	2	6
FAO Representation co-located in an RO/SRO	3	10
Multiple accreditation	10	30
Total	33	100

10. For the purposes of this document, the totality of these modalities is referred to as “FAO Country Offices”.

III. ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF FAO COUNTRY OFFICES

11. FAO Country Offices, working under overall corporate guidance, and in line with the Strategic Framework 2022–31, offer policy advice and support to countries in the mandated areas of FAO, facilitated through partnerships, resources and an active country programme to provide technical assistance, develop capacities and deliver core services, while fully observing international standards of accountability to establish leadership and strengthen impact at country level.

12. The offices deliver on the programmatic priorities of each country as agreed in their respective Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and ensure effective and efficient operations with adequate human and financial resources. Specifically, FAO Country Offices: a) advocate, inform and support policies and investment in the areas of FAO’s mandate; b) provide technical assistance and deliver core services; c) assist and catalyse partnership and resource mobilization activities to support agrifood systems transformation; d) position FAO as the specialized/authoritative technical agency in food and agriculture and agrifood systems transformation; and e) ensure risk-smart and accountable operations and management.

IV. EVOLVING CONTEXT – DRIVERS OF CHANGE

13. Over the years, both external and internal drivers of change have impacted the development context and hence the needs and expectations from FAO Country Offices which need to be taken into account when considering FAO Country Office Transformation.

External drivers of change include:

- (a) changes in income levels, economic development and evolution of country context, and structural transformation of countries (impacting the role of agriculture, employment and source of livelihoods);
- (b) changes in development agendas to respond to evolving global challenges and the SDGs (climate change, crises and conflicts, migration, etc.);
- (c) changes in the agrifood policy context and agrifood systems approach; and

- (d) increasing vulnerabilities due to climate change and other factors, including, *inter alia*, for the Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Internal drivers of change include:

- (a) changes in the size, complexity and type of funding of operations managed by the FAO Country Offices, with a significant portion of these resources derived from extrabudgetary contributions, in the context of a flat nominal Regular Programme budget for FAO (past 12 years);
- (b) evolution of global initiatives and goals for which FAO needs to support countries and monitor progress;
- (c) evolution of digitalization and work modalities; and
- (d) UN repositioning bringing new programming modalities and efficiency changes in the operational environment.

14. Two of these drivers are elaborated further below, namely changes in income level of countries and changes in the size, complexity and type of funding of operations managed by the FAO Country Offices.

Country income levels, economic development and evolution of country context

15. In the LAC region, country income levels have changed significantly over the last 30 years, with a major increase in the number of countries in the upper-middle and even high-income status (85 percent currently versus 36 percent in 1993). Fifteen percent of countries remain in the lower-middle-income category and none in the low-income category.⁸

16. However, despite major growth in country income levels, the food security and nutrition situation of many LAC countries continues to deteriorate. In the region, the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity, of overweight in children under 5 years of age and of adult obesity are higher than the global average. Additionally, the region has the costliest healthy diet compared with other regions of the world, hampering the achievement of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).⁹ In reviewing FAO Country Office presence, it is therefore necessary to not only consider income but also further categorization under the income level (e.g. SIDS and low-income food-deficit country [LIFDC]) and other factors impacting food security and sustainable development, such as susceptibility to natural disasters, climate change and protracted crises.

Size, complexity and funding of operations managed by FAO Country Offices

17. In the past ten years, the operational context of FAO has changed significantly with Regular Programme resources remaining largely stagnant and extrabudgetary resources almost doubling. In 2022, FAO Country Offices in the LAC region operated 282 active projects with a total budget of USD 687 million. In the Programme of Work and Budget 2024–25, the net appropriation budget for the LAC region is USD 90 million with extrabudgetary delivery expected to be around two and a half times that amount, reaching an estimated USD 241 million,¹⁰ highlighting the growing dependence on and importance of extrabudgetary contributions.

⁸ To be noted the special situation of Haiti that remains the poorest country in the Latin America and the Caribbean region and amongst the poorest and more vulnerable countries in the world ranking 163 out of 191 countries in the UN Human Development Index.

⁹ FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP). 2023. *Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition – Latin America and the Caribbean 2022: Towards improving affordability of healthy diets*. Santiago. In: <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc3859en>

¹⁰ [CL 174/3 Annex 5](#)

18. With this growing divergence between Regular Programme and extrabudgetary resources, a growing variation in the size and complexity of country portfolios is also seen. In the LAC region in 2022, three countries accounted for more than 40 percent of the extrabudgetary resources mobilized and managed in 2022 (Argentina, Chile and Colombia).

19. However, despite these significant changes in the demand on FAO and the size and funding of operations over the last decade, the Regular Programme staffing model of FAO Country Offices has remained stagnant.

V. CHALLENGES AND GAPS

20. Five main challenges and gaps need to be addressed to improve the functioning of Country Offices in the current context, while keeping within existing Regular Programme budget allocations to the Decentralized Offices Network globally and at regional level:

- (a) Criteria for Regular Programme resource allocation¹¹ to Country Offices within the region are not clearly and transparently determined according to defined models.
- (b) Regular Programme staffing profiles do not adequately reflect the current realities, complexities and evolving demands of office operations.
- (c) Structural, budgetary and administrative set-ups in Country Offices is not agile with, for example, 97 percent of Regular Programme resources funding budgeted posts.
- (d) Set-ups do not take into consideration specific country situations and differing needs.
- (e) The major rise in the size of country programmes funded by extrabudgetary contributions carries an increase in the level of risks to be managed. Fit-for-purpose administrative and operational procedures and appropriate delegations of authority, supported by strengthened operational and internal control capacities, are not fully in place to ensure appropriate delivery at scale, while ensuring effective risk management.

VI. PROPOSED MEASURES FOR IMPROVEMENT

21. To address the evolving context, and the challenges and gaps identified, measures are proposed to be put in place which seek to provide County Offices in the region with:

- (a) a renewed business model, better reflecting country contexts and functional needs based on agreed principles and criteria;
- (b) increased flexibility via a strategic adjustment in staffing profiles funded through the Regular Programme, along with the enhanced allocation of non-earmarked resources (general operating expenses [GOE]) specifically tailored to match the evolving realities and complexities of operating in a specific country; this includes aligning Regular Programme staff to core functions; and
- (c) increased agility through a share of resources being pooled at regional level, enabling a more targeted and effective response to specific country-level needs.

22. The overarching principles guiding the proposed adjustments are that: the approach and resource allocations are tailored to countries' evolution, specificities, capacities and needs; flexibility, improved agility and strengthened capacity are built in; office staffing structures reflect modern ways of operating and delivering, with due attention to internal controls; changes are implemented in a progressive manner, including taking into account incumbency status and natural attrition; and proposed adjustments do not negatively impact the regional budgetary allocation to the FAO Representation network.

¹¹ With the exception of Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) resources

Adjustments to country coverage, Country Office structures and related Regular Programme allocations

23. A flexible business model with a solid foundation is key for more effective cooperation to tackle today's challenges as well as adjust to new dynamics and demands likely to arise in the future. FAO Country Offices should be able to quickly adapt to the nature and size of the project portfolio in the country, following a programmatic approach in support to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the CPFs.

24. Table 2 outlines four models taking into consideration a combination of factors, including country income level and further categorization under the income level (e.g. SIDS, LIFDC), specific vulnerabilities such as climate change impacts, conflicts or protracted crises, size of the country programme, and location of the Country Office in relation to the Regional or Subregional Office.

25. Each model describes the proposed staffing level to be funded by the Regular Programme to meet the challenges of delivering FAO's multifaceted and global mandate in a rapidly evolving environment. With these models, approximately 10 percent of overall resources would be available for more flexible expenditures, including other human resources and general operating expenses.¹² The models and the countries therein would be reviewed regularly to ensure an agile system for adjustments in response to changing circumstances.

Table 2
Proposed models (Regular Programme funded)

Models of Country Offices	Indicative number of Regular Programme funded Staff (Core)
Model 1: Countries with large programmes and/or with major economic, environmental and social challenges	
1.A – Crisis countries and/or countries with large programmes	Seven (7) core staff
1.B – Low- and lower-middle-income countries	Seven (7) core staff
Model 2: Upper-middle-income countries	
2.A – Upper-middle-income countries	Five (5) core staff + government encouraged to second staff
2.B – Large upper-middle-income countries with higher capacities ¹³	One (1) core staff (International FAO Representative) + enhanced national ownership and contribution encouraged
Model 3: Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Landlocked Countries	
3.A – Small-size SIDS (population of less than 100 000)	One (1) National Correspondent (NC)
3.B – Larger SIDS and small landlocked countries	One (1) National Professional Officer (NPO)

¹² Up from the current 3 percent.

¹³ Countries members of major global political and economic clubs e.g. the Group of 20 (G20), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the BRICS (Brazil, Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa) countries (BRICS).

3.C – Large high-income countries ¹⁴	One (1) National Professional Officer (NPO)
Model 4: FAO Representations co-located with a Regional or Subregional Office	
4.A – Country Office co-located with Regional Office	One (1) NPO with (Deputy) Regional Representative as Head of the Country Office
4.B – Country Office co-located with Subregional Office	One (1) NPO with Subregional Coordinator as Head of the Country Office

26. The LAC region is characterized by a high level of urbanization, and of upper-middle and high-income countries. Although several countries in the region belong to the upper-middle-income level category, the disparity within the category of countries with similar levels of income per capita is high, displaying different development outcomes. As in other emerging economies in the world, countries of the region still face high inequalities in terms of income distribution and access to public services, both across the population and across subnational regions, a pattern that has persisted despite the positive per capita gross domestic product performance in the past decade. The proposed adjustments aim at better supporting countries according to their specific capacities and needs.

27. With the proposed adjustments, crisis and large programme countries (Model 1.A), as well as low-/lower-middle-income countries which are also least developed and/or LIFDCs (Model 1.B) will gain agility in terms of Regular Programme funded resource allocations, allowing them to deliver at scale and better match the challenges and complexities of the specific operating environment. The core staffing would cover an international FAO Representative and national staff. The increase in more flexible non-staff/general operating expenses (GOE) resources would allow the Country Office to respond in an agile manner to needed support in key areas such as an unforeseen need for specific technical priorities, programme development and support, and risk management and internal controls. The countries with large extrabudgetary project delivery would further benefit from appropriate, complementary and mutually supportive project funding allocations, as described in Section VI.

28. Progressive enhanced ownership and cost-sharing in line with national capacities is the recommended approach in middle-income countries (Model 2). The core staffing would cover an international FAO Representative and national staff, with governments encouraged to consider seconding additional national staff to Country Offices. While cost-sharing is the recommended approach in middle-income countries, Country Offices in large upper-middle-income countries with higher capacities, reflected by membership to major political and economic intergovernmental fora and organizations (e.g. G20, OECD, BRICS) are encouraged to support enhanced national ownership and contribution to the functioning of the office to better leverage national development and institutional capacities to support both government priorities and regional and global South-South and Triangular cooperation.

29. Special attention is granted to SIDS (Model 3) to account for growing vulnerability and climate change threats. The capacity of Country Offices in the Caribbean would be strengthened by providing a yearly allocation of non-earmarked resources to support local capacity for project/programme development and implementation, and to help bridge the geographical divide between the Subregional and Country Offices. FAO Representatives heading larger SIDS offices through multiple accreditations would be supported by an Assistant FAOR (NPO) recruited locally. The proposed

¹⁴ Countries to continue to benefit from international FAO Representatives (FAOR) presence with an outposted technical officer/FAOR from the Subregional Office, in order to allow Subregional Offices to benefit better from existing capacities of the country. The country is invited to consider having greater ownership of the office contributing to financing its capacities including through secondment of national staff.

adjustments would also support promoting FAO's presence, coordination and collaboration with the United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs). Other measures would include a) drawing on regional and/or project support and resources to boost allocations provided; b) strengthening capacity by outposting (on a rotational basis) staff with the required profiles from the Regional Offices, Subregional Offices and/or headquarters; and c) seeking specialized secondments from donors.

30. FAO Representations co-located with a Regional or Subregional Office (Model 4) would be restructured to benefit fully from the strong support and expertise available through these offices.

31. For high-income countries, a full cost reimbursement of FAO presence will continue to be sought. In this regard, FAO would also welcome government consideration and willingness to establish knowledge hubs in FAO domains of strategic importance.

32. All models imply an evolution in the staffing composition of FAO Country Offices. Traditionally, positions have included several drivers (covering tasks such as physical distribution of mail and documentation), receptionists, library/record and archive assistants, as well as administrative and office assistants. Yet, digitalization, the corporate move towards vertical integration of non-location specific administrative transactions in the Shared Services Centre (SSC) in Budapest, and the evolving future of work (e.g. new working modalities) have changed requirements and expanded opportunities and tools, necessitating FAO to adapt. Positions such as information resource assistants are now present in many offices and staff time has been liberated for more substantive work, particularly in decentralized locations, challenging the concept of required functions to cover certain tasks.

33. High-income countries may wish to strengthen partnerships with FAO through the hosting of regional knowledge hubs with distinctive features and complementary functions, to leverage FAO's full potential and advance innovation-driven transformation of agrifood systems.

Additional agility and flexibility

34. Beyond the proposed changes in country coverage, structure and budget allocation shown in Table 2, additional capacity would be built in to enable "advance funding" for emerging needs, fast changing country situations, and/or required programme development support. A pool of resources, equivalent to approximately 12 percent of the staff costs for the FAO Representation network in the region, would be held at regional level for rapid allocation to Country Offices as needed for prompt response to specific requirements (e.g. programme development support, particularly for countries with very low portfolios, interventions to address administrative bottlenecks, specific risks arising, etc.).

VII. FURTHER MEASURES

35. Elements to be considered for future developments, some of which are already under implementation, are presented below for information. These measures are designed with the principle of a cost-neutral Regular Programme allocation to Decentralized Offices, good risk management and adjustment to country specificities and vulnerability level (e.g. SIDS).

Extrabudgetary programmes/project management

36. With the growing number of countries managing large, complex extrabudgetary-funded projects and programmes, ensuring the capacity for timely and high-quality delivery while also ensuring the capacity for an adequate and compliant management of the pool of resources entrusted is becoming more acute, requiring strengthened operational capacities, the introduction of specific compliance and internal control measures and minimum standard staffing for Country Offices. This approach not only supports compliance but also enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation. It is therefore proposed that project/extrabudgetary resources approved in alignment and support of the Compensation Payment Fund be pooled and used in a systematic fashion to permit proper resources management based on specific needs, simultaneously bolstering operational support for projects and ensuring the strengthening of internal control measures and risk management over the implementation

of field activities. In the LAC region this situation is a reality with, in particular, the major increase of project portfolios due to successful negotiation of relatively large Unilateral Trust Fund projects to implement programmes funded by vertical funds such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) or the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

37. Two examples, illustrating possible indicative minimum requirements in terms of complementary extrabudgetary funded staff resources (national and/or international) to ensure adequate management and delivery of projects/extrabudgetary funded programmes with risk mitigation and support at country level, are provided below:

- (a) For a large portfolio under direct execution (over USD 100 million) extrabudgetary funded staff could include: Deputy FAOR (P5); Food Security Analyst (P5/P4); Head of Operations/Emergency Coordinator (P5) in case of emergency portfolio; Project(s) Manager (P4/P5) – number may depend on country set-up, e.g. if federal states; Procurement Officer (P4/P3); Logistics Officer (P3); Operations Officer (P3/P4); Monitoring and Evaluation Officer (M&E) (P3); Administration/Finance or Human Resources Officer (P4/P3); Compliance/Ethics/Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (PSEA) Officer (P4); Communications (P3); and Security Officer (P4) in case of significant risks in the country.
- (b) For a small non-emergency portfolio under direct execution (e.g. USD 5-25 million) extrabudgetary funded staff could include: Food Security Analyst (Consultant [national or international]); Project Manager (Consultant) or Operations Officer (P3); Compliance/Ethics/PSEA (NPO); and Security Officer (NPO or Consultant).

38. Dialogue with donors will be pursued and internal guidelines developed to ensure that minimum standard staffing structures be implemented, as appropriate.

Managerial environment

39. Corporate transformational changes and management adjustments underway, which would help address challenges and bottlenecks at the Decentralized Office level, include:

- (a) the strategic transformation of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) (covering improvement of business processes and of the systems that support them), which will support better monitoring and reporting, facilitate internal control measures and support further delegation of authority;
- (b) the vertical integration of servicing work, i.e. centralizing some of the non-location specific administrative transactions to the SSC in Budapest, which will improve speed and coherence and meet internal control requirements in a homogenous manner;
- (c) capacity building and career development for Country Offices, including growth opportunities for national staff (e.g. training, missions, international travel, international temporary assignments, etc.) and the development of a human resources approach to facilitate the progression of well-performing national staff to international positions; and
- (d) the strategic review of Project Cycle and Operational Modalities to ensure fit for purpose processes for project implementation and refinement of fast-track procedures for Level 3 emergency countries to ensure agile and timely responses.

VIII. NEXT STEPS

40. The Regional Conference is invited to reflect on the proposed measures presented to the 38th Session of the Regional Conference for Latin America and Caribbean to address the challenges encountered in the delivery of the FAO Strategic Framework at country level and provide their feedback and guidance.

41. Should the set of proposals outlined in this document be supported in principle, individual consultations will take place with countries, with a view to expedite a concrete and transparent implementation of the proposed arrangements.

Annex 1

Selected action taken in 2020–2022 at headquarters and in the regions to improve efficiency and effectiveness of Decentralized Offices

1. In 2020–2021, 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: a) the 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; b) a rethink of the organizational structure of Regional and Subregional Offices as an integral part of Regional Offices; and c) the launch 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.
2. 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 a view to improving 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.
3. 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 the promotion of vertical integration and strengthened support services, with the Regional Office or Shared Services Centre (SSC), and finally the adoption of a more effective and efficient administration moving towards a digital FAO in all locations.
4. A Global Common Functional Organigramme was developed by the regions (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Regional Offices - Global Common Functional Organigramme



5. The revised set-up was designed with built-in flexibility to adapt its main features to the specificity of each region. The implemented transformed structures of the Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) and Subregional Offices for the Caribbean (SLC) and for Mesoamerica (SLM), integrating some region-specific features, are provided in Figures 2, 3 and 4 below.

Figure 2
FAO Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (RLC) – Transformed structure



Figure 3
FAO Subregional Office for the Caribbean (SLC) – Transformed structure

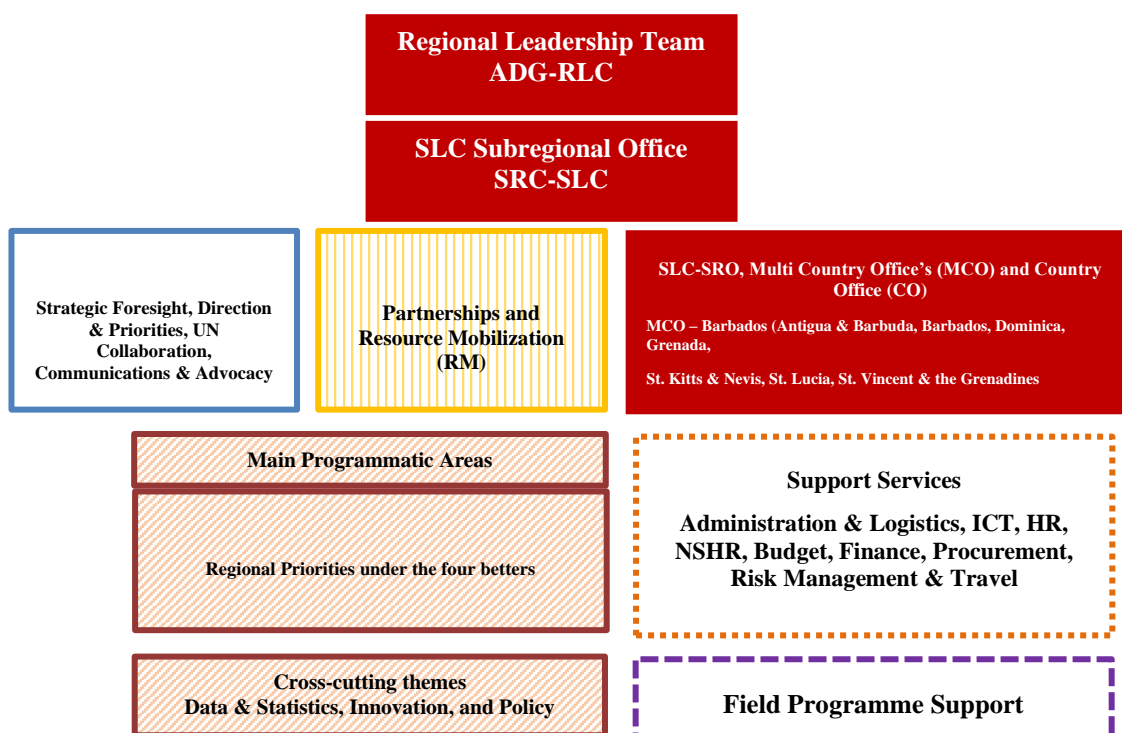
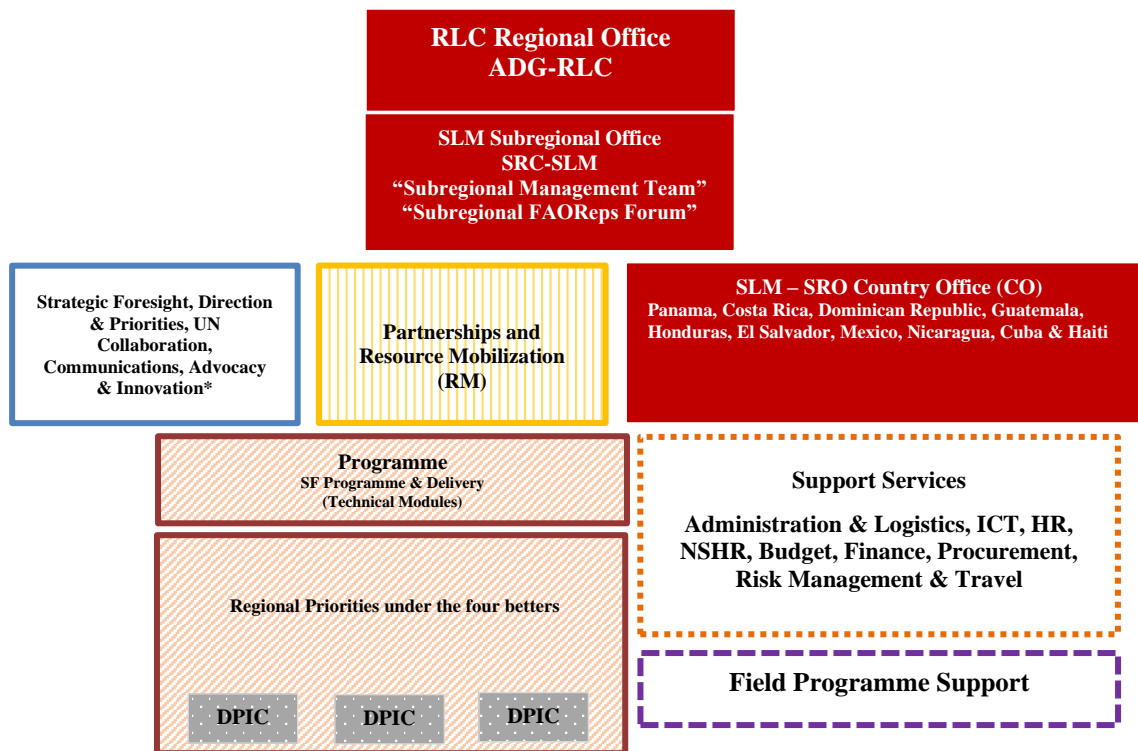


Figure 4
FAO Subregional Office for Mesoamerica (SLM) – Transformed structure



**Under SLM Subregional Coordinator*