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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF INTEREST TO FAO

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INTRODUCTION

1. The information provided in this document under the thematic headings which follow, supplements the information contained in document C 93/9, already considered by the FAO Council at its 103rd Session in June 1993. The information is drawn largely from the 1993 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which took place in Geneva from 28 June to 30 July 1993. It should be noted, however, that information on recent developments in the area of environment and sustainable development, including on the outcome of the first substantive session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, will be provided under item 7 of the Conference Agenda, and the Conference may therefore wish to discuss the follow-up to the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) under that item. Similarly, the Organization's operational activities for development are extensively dealt with in the major documents provided for items 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the Conference's Agenda, and FAO's follow-up to General Assembly resolution 47/199 may be more appropriately dealt with in the context of those discussions, particularly under item 9: Programme Implementation Report.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION

2. Preparations are under way for a series of expert meetings to follow-up the first session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Standing Committee on Poverty Alleviation. These meetings, tentatively scheduled for the period from November 1993 to January 1994, are to address "social mobilization and organization of the poor"; the "effects on poverty of structural adjustment programmes, job creation policies and participation of small-scale enterprises in international trade"; and "exchange of experiences on poverty reduction impacts of social funds and safety nets, including mobilization of domestic and external resources for poverty alleviation". FAO has provided UNCTAD with documentation relevant to the expert meeting. The meetings will provide background for discussions at the second session of the Standing Committee itself (tentatively scheduled for May 1994), which FAO expects to attend.

3. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Sub-Committee on Rural Development (formerly ACC Task Force on Rural Development), for which FAO provides the chairman and secretariat, held its 21st meeting in Washington D.C. from 5 to 7 May 1993. Discussions covered, *inter alia*, the impact of national macro-economic policies on the rural poor; the contribution of small industries to rural development; refugees/returnees and development; shelter improvement in rural areas as a contribution to sustainable rural development and poverty alleviation; and women and the environment. Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000, as they relate to rural women, remains a standing item on the agenda of this inter-agency body.

4. The Sub-Committee agreed that its main focus should be on sustainable rural development, including related subjects such as macro-economic policies, intersectoral and rural-urban linkages, and interconnections between rural poverty and environment, to the extent they affect rural development and contribute to poverty alleviation. The Sub-Committee agreed to have "Policy Approaches to Rural Poverty Alleviation" and "Environment and Rural Development" as the main discussion themes at its meetings in 1994 and 1995 respectively.

HUMANITARIAN AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

5. The Economic and Social Council, during the Coordination segment of its 1993 substantive session, reviewed the coordination of humanitarian assistance, including the continuum from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development. The Deputy Director-General, representing the

Director-General, delivered a statement and participated in the exchange of views between a panel of UN system organization representatives and Member Nation delegations.

6. In his statement, the Deputy Director-General stressed the primary importance of ensuring high-quality needs' assessments, as it was the quality of the assessments which determined the quality of the appeals, which in turn determined the response of donors and thus the adequacy of the humanitarian effort. He alluded to the objectives of FAO, to the enhancement of work on agricultural relief and rehabilitation needs assessments, and to the problems encountered in obtaining donor funding for agricultural relief and rehabilitation work. He also said that one of the advantages of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) was that "it can be as broad as the problem", by including in its discussions representatives from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and possibly donor governments, and expressed the conviction that more reliance should be placed on the Committee to guide the system's emergency relief and humanitarian assistance work. In particular, the IASC constituted a good mechanism for providing policy guidance for humanitarian assistance activities that was fully consistent with the guidance received from the governing bodies of the IASC members. With regard to the coordination role of the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), the Deputy Director-General recognized the "excellent manner in which the Department had promoted an effective, coherent and well-coordinated, system-wide approach to emergencies".

7. While at the Coordination segment of 1992, the outcome had been recorded in a "Concluding Statement by the President", this year the output was "agreed conclusions" which were viewed as being less binding on Member States than a resolution, but having more weight than the views put forward under the responsibility of the Chairman. ECOSOC "requested the Secretary-General to forward these recommendations to the various parts of the United Nations system for implementation and to apprise the Council at its substantive session of 1994 of the steps taken by the UN system to give effect to those recommendations."

8. The conclusions of primary interest to FAO include the following: DHA should promote a timely response to early warning of potential humanitarian emergencies; the Disaster Management Training Programme should be further developed, in cooperation with relevant UN system organizations; DHA should intensify its cooperation with governments, UN system organizations and NGOs in building up national capacities for disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation in the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR); and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs), should serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of policy issues related to humanitarian assistance and for formulating a coherent and timely United Nations response to major and complex emergencies. It was also concluded that consolidated appeals should be used selectively, for complex emergencies that required a system-wide response; and that appeals should take into account the activities of bilateral donors, as well as those of the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and other NGOs. Information on the follow-up of consolidated appeals, including the contribution and disbursement by donors and the implementation of projects contained therein, should be provided regularly to governments by DHA, based on the information received from the concerned organizations.

9. With regard to the continuum from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development, ECOSOC recommended, *inter alia*, that "governments, development organizations of the United Nations system, together with the Bretton Woods institutions and regional commissions, should be involved at an early stage of emergencies to ensure that needs' assessments, including those of non-governmental organizations, relief programmes and consolidated appeals, take account of rehabilitation and long-term development requirements, promote national capacity building and help prevent and mitigate further emergencies". Development organizations of the UN system, together with the Bretton Woods institutions, are invited to promote consideration of issues relating to the

continuum from emergency relief to rehabilitation and development in appropriate development fora such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Round Tables and the World Bank Consultative Groups.

10. In the agreed conclusions, the Governing Bodies of UN system organizations are requested to provide their full support for the implementation of the conclusions. In general, FAO implementation of these conclusions does not pose problems as the Organization is already fully cooperating with DHA in a number of areas touched upon in the agreed conclusions. FAO has carried out food needs' assessments, normally in collaboration with WFP, assessed the need for agricultural relief and rehabilitation and prepared projects for these purposes, participated in the preparation of consolidated appeals to donors, engaged in resource mobilization, implemented relief and agricultural rehabilitation projects, provided information for progress reports and participated regularly in the meetings of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the IASC Working Group and various task forces.

11. Areas where the conclusions could have been more explicit relate to the division of labour and to the financing of humanitarian assistance. For example, in complex emergencies the division of labour at field level among the UN Resident Coordinator, special coordinator for humanitarian assistance, emergency relief coordinator and the proposed field coordination unit, remains unclear. In this regard, ECOSOC "noted that the Department of Humanitarian Affairs was not an implementing agency with operational responsibility and capacity in the field."

12. ECOSOC, however, did emphasize the important role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator in, *inter alia*, coordinating inter-agency needs' assessment missions. While the food and agricultural rehabilitation needs' assessment work of FAO is always sent in a timely fashion to DHA and has been drawn upon for consolidated appeals coordinated by DHA, the timing of food needs' assessment missions depends on such technical considerations as the timing of planting and harvesting in affected areas. For this reason, it may not always be feasible to field such missions at the same time as a larger inter-agency mission.

13. Also in its agreed conclusions, ECOSOC "recognized the increasing need for humanitarian assistance and stressed the importance of adequate financial resources from existing sources and arrangements, both for relief and for the continuum to development." ECOSOC recognized that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), while a source of funding on a rapid disbursement basis, could not address the basic gap between demand and available resources, a point alluded to by a number of operational UN system organizations.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994

14. At its substantive session of 1993, ECOSOC discussed the International Conference on Population and Development. A number of key issues which the Conference should address were highlighted in the debate. These included population issues as integral parts of development and environment policies; the role of NGOs in the area of population; the need to strike a balance between individual rights and responsibilities of society; migration, including internal migration; ageing; empowerment of women; indigenous peoples; and ensuring that the outcome of the Conference was oriented toward specific action. The FAO statement to ECOSOC stressed that the Conference should give due attention to rural populations, significant not only in size but also in terms of their roles as food producers and users of natural resources.

15. ECOSOC adopted a draft resolution put forward by the second session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the International Conference on Population and Development, by which it recommended that the PrepCom become a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, and decided that the third meeting of the PrepCom be extended from two weeks to three weeks (4-22 April 1994), and that two-day pre-Conference consultations be convened at the venue of the Conference.

16. In the months prior to the third and final PrepCom meeting, a number of sub-regional meetings on population and development are being sponsored by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Although not part of the official preparatory process, the sub-regional meetings are expected to help maintain a high level of awareness of and interest in population issues. Meetings have been scheduled in Indonesia, Nepal, Tunisia and Vanuatu.

17. FAO has been and will be closely involved in inter-agency preparations for the Conference. The Organization was *inter alia* represented at a meeting of the ACC *Ad Hoc* Task Force for the International Conference on Population and Development, held on 13 July 1993 in Geneva.

World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 11-12 March 1995

18. As the FAO Council was informed orally in June 1993, the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the Summit held its organizational session in April 1993 in New York. At that session Ambassador Juan Somavia of Chile, President of ECOSOC, was elected Chairman of the PrepCom. The PrepCom also decided that the Summit would be convened on 11 and 12 March 1995 at Copenhagen, preceded by a meeting of personal representatives of Heads of State or government or other appropriate high-level representatives, from 6 to 10 March 1995. Through a series of substantive sessions to be held in January/February 1994, August/September 1994 and January 1995, the PrepCom will analyse in depth the core issues to be addressed by the Summit and agree on policy measures to be submitted to the Summit for decision. The UN Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD) in New York will serve as the Summit's secretariat.

19. "The World Summit for Social Development, including the role of the United Nations system in promoting social development" was the topic of the High-level segment of the 1993 substantive session of ECOSOC. The output of the segment was a summary by the President of ECOSOC. The summary emphasized the need for each country to set its own national social objectives, the importance of participatory processes in promoting social development, and the role of multilateral cooperation in an interdependent world.

20. There was unanimous and strong support for the Summit among the delegations to the ECOSOC High-level segment. The United Nations system was recognized as a key instrument for promoting greater understanding and consensus among nations. The specialized agencies and programmes will be asked to give substantive and operational support to the PrepCom and its Bureau in the discharge of their responsibilities. FAO has begun preparations for its contribution to the Summit.

Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-5 September 1995

21. At its 1993 substantive session, under the item on "Advancement of Women", ECOSOC decided that the inter-sessional working group of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women would be convened for a period of five working days during the first two weeks of January 1994, and would be open to all Member and Observer States. The working group would further develop the structure of the Platform of Action, which would be the final document of the Conference. This was intended to provide the CSW with the time necessary to complete the draft Platform for further consideration by regional preparatory conferences and national preparatory committees.

22. In a related action, ECOSOC adopted a resolution which endorsed the System-wide Medium-term Plan for the Advancement of Women for the period 1996-2001. The resolution also requested the Secretary-General to arrange for a revision of the Plan, taking into account the Platform for Action and the second review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000, following their endorsement by the Beijing Conference.
23. As part of the overall UN system preparations for the Beijing Conference, the FAO contribution will focus on priority action in three areas that fall within its mandate: food security, food production and food processing. Special attention will also be given to the production, analysis and utilization of gender-disaggregated data relating to the rural sector. An information programme is being planned around the three main themes, in cooperation with the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC).
24. FAO is preparing a programme proposal involving the entire Organization to assist Member Governments in ensuring that rural women are involved in national preparatory activities of the Conference and that their specific situation is included in national reports. Such reports form part of country contributions to the preparatory process. Practical guidelines developed by FAO, to ensure that issues such as food security, food production and food processing will be addressed in the reports, will be made available to National Committees for use on a voluntary basis.
25. Under the same agenda item, ECOSOC took note of the Secretary-General's Note transmitting the report of the Task Force on the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). The Council agreed that a merger of the two organizations could proceed, subject to the recommendations set out in the report - in particular the need for proper analysis of the legal, financial and administrative implications of a merger - and subject to approval by the 48th Session of the General Assembly. The objective in merging the two organizations is to achieve a stronger, more unified programme for the advancement of women. The Council also adopted resolutions on "Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat", "Draft Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women", "Communications on the status of women", "Women, environment and development", "Women and children under apartheid", "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women" and the "Situation of and assistance to Palestinian women".

World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, June 1993

26. The FAO Council was informed orally in June 1993 that the Director-General had addressed the World Conference on Human Rights. The Director-General's statement and other interventions by the FAO delegation focused on humanity's right to freedom from hunger, and drew the attention of the Conference to reaffirmations of that right, most recently in the World Declaration on Nutrition adopted by the International Conference on Nutrition. "There can be no human rights," the Director-General said, "for a person debased and defeated by hunger."
27. The final report of the Conference reflects "the fundamental rights of everyone to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being, including food and medical care, health and the necessary social services", as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The report goes on to affirm that food should not be used as a tool for political pressure. Also included in the final document is a paragraph asserting that the existence of widespread extreme poverty inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights, and calling upon the international community to maintain the alleviation and eventual elimination of poverty as a high priority.

DRUG ABUSE CONTROL

28. A number of resolutions related to drug abuse control were adopted by ECOSOC at its 1993 substantive session, including resolution 1993/43 entitled "Implementation of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Drug Abuse Control". In this resolution, ECOSOC called upon all entities of the system associated with the Action Plan to establish agency-specific implementation plans for their activities related to drug abuse control, and to fully incorporate implementation of the Plan into their planning instruments. Also, it requested ACC to give due attention, under the direction of the Executive Director of United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), to updating the Plan for consideration by ECOSOC and by the General Assembly. ECOSOC requested UNDCP to ensure coordination of all operational activities relating to drug abuse control at the field level in collaboration with field representatives of other UN system bodies.

29. FAO was represented at the annual meeting of the ACC Sub-Committee on Coordination of International Drug Abuse Control, held 6-8 September 1993, at Unesco Headquarters in Paris. The Sub-Committee is preparing, in addition to the updated System-Wide Action Plan for Drug Abuse Control, topical papers on drug abuse control as contributions to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the World Summit for Social Development. The Sub-Committee also discussed, *inter alia*, ways of incorporating drug abuse and trafficking concerns into broader development strategies; and the prevention of drug abuse through education and information.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES: ECOSOC DISCUSSION

30. The report of the Secretary-General on implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 was the main basis for discussion during the Operational Activities segment of the 1993 substantive session of ECOSOC. An FAO statement made at the segment gave an overview of its operational activities, underlining that such activities are directly linked to or even result from its long-standing analytical and substantive activities in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, financed under its Regular Programme. In the statement, ECOSOC was informed that the FAO Council at its 103rd Session had received and discussed a report on FAO's progress in implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199.

31. Under this item ECOSOC adopted resolution 1993/7, which called for continued and expeditious progress in implementing General Assembly resolution 47/199. It urged developed countries to substantially increase their official development assistance, including contributions for the operational activities of the UN system. It requested, *inter alia*, the development of an effective methodology for the evaluation of the programme approach, and a review of progress made by the UN system in applying national execution. It stressed the importance of strengthening and supporting the UN resident coordinator system, including widening the pool of professionals eligible for appointment as UNDP resident representatives/resident coordinators. ECOSOC invited the Secretary-General to provide information on steps being taken in dealing with the Country Strategy Notes. It also decided to review implementation of the resolution at its substantive session of 1994.

32. ECOSOC adopted a second resolution under this item which appealed to all Member States of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to make every effort to achieve the fourth replenishment before the end of 1993.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS AT ECOSOC

33. The main results of the 1993 substantive session of ECOSOC of interest to FAO have been covered above. Some additional information on this session is given below.

34. It was the third time that ECOSOC convened with its new structure: a High-level segment, a Coordination segment, an Operational Activities segment and a Committee segment (with separate economic and social committees). The procedures and outputs of these segments continue to change and further changes may be expected from the process of intergovernmental restructuring.

35. At its Coordination segment ECOSOC, in addition to the theme of humanitarian assistance, also considered the theme "Coordination of the activities of the UN system in the fields of preventive action and intensification of the struggle against malaria and diarrhoeal diseases, in particular cholera". FAO contributed substantially to the preparation of a background paper for this theme, for which the World Health Organization (WHO) took lead coordinating responsibility. As was the case with humanitarian assistance, FAO was in the panel of UN system organizations which exchanged views with Member Nation delegations. A joint FAO/World Bank/Unesco statement expressed satisfaction with WHO's management of the preparation of the background document and support for the conclusions and recommendations contained therein. In its agreed conclusions on this subject, ECOSOC underlined, *inter alia*, the linkages between health and development and the need for greater resources, both human and financial, for the health sector, and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report on implementation of its recommendations for the substantive session in 1994.

36. ECOSOC considered and endorsed the report of its subsidiary body, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). Under a related agenda item dealing with environment and desertification and drought, FAO had prepared the report of the Secretary-General on combating aridity, soil erosion, waterlogging, desertification and the effects of drought in South Asia. The FAO study, which formed the report of the Secretary-General, was funded by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNDP, and had been requested by ECOSOC in its resolution 1991/97. ECOSOC did not engage in any substantive debate on the study and no action was taken. FAO intends to publish a longer and more technical version of the study as a strategy paper.

37. ECOSOC adopted by consensus a resolution calling for multisectoral collaboration within the UN system on matters concerning tobacco production and consumption. In this resolution ECOSOC, while recognizing the serious health consequences of tobacco consumption, also acknowledged the socio-economic context of tobacco production and the concerns of tobacco-producing countries, particularly those whose economies were heavily dependent on tobacco production.

38. In this same resolution, ECOSOC requested that the Secretary-General establish, under the auspices of WHO and within existing resources, a focal point for the UN system on the subject of multisectoral collaboration on the economic and social aspects of tobacco production and consumption. It also requested the Secretary-General to seek the full collaboration of the World Bank, FAO, GATT, ILO, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNIDO and others as appropriate, in contributing to the successful implementation of comprehensive strategies through multisectoral collaboration. ECOSOC invited Member States and organizations of the UN system to develop a range of options - including bilateral and multilateral collaboration on agricultural diversification, and development of other economic alternatives to tobacco production, as appropriate - to assist countries for which tobacco was a major export and where demand for their products had decreased as a result of successful tobacco control strategies. ECOSOC also requested that the Secretary-General report to it at its substantive session in 1994 on progress made by the UN focal point in the implementation of multisectoral collaboration on tobacco or health. An intervention by the FAO delegation referred to the close collaboration between WHO and FAO on this matter. It also referred to the environmental impact of tobacco production, and emphasized the fact that over the long term, efforts to reduce tobacco production were unlikely to be effective unless accompanied by measures to curtail demand. Nevertheless, the FAO statement noted, tobacco continued to be of considerable economic importance for several developing countries.

TRADE AND COMMODITY ISSUES

39. The Executive Board of the Common Fund for Commodities, in September 1993, approved four more projects sponsored by FAO's International Commodity Bodies (ICBs). The projects are on bananas, palm and palm kernel oil, coconut oil and a second project on coir. They envisage contributions by the Common Fund for a total of SDRs4 million or approximately US\$5.6 million and a high share of co-financing or counterpart contribution. A fifth project on tea was considered favourably, but contributions by the Fund of SDRs1.2 million, amounting to one-third of total project costs, were made conditional on two-thirds being raised through co-financing from other sources. FAO will be the Project Executing Agency (PEA) for the projects on palm and palm kernel oils and on coir to which the Fund would contribute a total of SDRs330 000 or about US\$460 000.

40. In regard to projects implemented by FAO, the 59th Session of the Committee on Commodity Problems (CCP) in June 1993 had been informed of the Common Fund's concern about the dual competence vested with FAO in cases where an FAO services ICB was also the Supervisory Body. The CCP did not see any conflict in the two functions exercised by FAO and concluded that FAO's commodity bodies acting as ICBs should perform the supervisory functions for projects currently in the pipeline and destined to be executed by FAO. It requested that the Common Fund be informed accordingly. The Fund's Executive Board, at its September 1993 meeting, accepted this proposal as an "interim" arrangement and decided to consider, in future, exceptionally and on a case-by-case basis, whether the project supervision mechanisms proposed by the FAO commodity bodies were appropriate. It would also determine the resources necessary to be earmarked in the project budgets for supervision purposes, subject to a ceiling of US\$15 000 per year per project.