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### HELPING THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES TO DEFINE AN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

#### REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL

#### I. Introduction

1. The FAO Council at its Ninety-eighth Session in November 1990 adopted Resolution 1/98 entitled "Least Developed Countries (LDCs)", and requested the Director-General "... to bear in mind, in connection with all FAO activities, the overall results of the Second United Nations Conference on the LDCs and to report to the next Conference of FAO on his suggestions for approaches and measures both to more clearly associate the Organization with the implementation of the Programme of Action and to help the LDCs, at their request, to define an agricultural development strategy for the next ten years, in line with paragraph 86 of the final declaration of the Paris Conference."

2. The Programme of Action gives high priority to the development of the agricultural sector among the objectives of the LDCs in the 1990s. Agriculture accounts for nearly half of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the LDCs and employs almost three-quarters of their labour force. The Programme recommends specific measures under the sections dealing with rural development, modernization of agricultural production, food security, food aid, development of fisheries resources, environment and disaster mitigation, preparedness and prevention. While the primary responsibility for implementation is placed on the LDCs, the international community is urged to extend support to them to achieve the objectives set forth in the Programme.

3. Paragraph 86 of the Programme of Action to which the Council document relates is part of the section entitled "Rural Development, Modernization of Agricultural Production and Food Security". It calls on the LDCs to formulate, with international help, an agricultural development strategy in order to adopt or improve price and credit policies; income distribution favouring the low-income strata; public sector involvement in infrastructures supporting agricultural production;

cooperation arrangements at regional and sub-regional levels; agricultural diversification by integrating crop and livestock farming, fisheries, horticulture and forestry; processing, distribution and marketing of agricultural products covering domestic consumption and export; research and technical upgrading of farmers individually and in groups; land tenure; environmental preservation and protection; credit systems and reduction of pre- and post-harvest losses.

4. The present report responds to the request of the Council and analyses the relevance of FAO's policies and priorities to the Programme of Action. It further outlines approaches and measures aimed at intensifying FAO's association with the implementation, follow-up, monitoring and review of the Programme of Action and with efforts to help the LDCs to define an agricultural development strategy for the 1990s.

## II. FAO's close association with the implementation of the Programme of Action - Approaches and Measures

5. FAO collaborates closely through the inter-agency mechanisms in the follow-up and implementation of the Programme of Action. In 1990 the Organization submitted a report to the Paris Conference on the review of food and agriculture of the LDCs during the 1980s which also contained suggestions for the 1990s. FAO also assisted in the finalization of the section on food and agriculture of the LDCs' Annual Report compiled by UNCTAD and provided inputs for the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the General Assembly on the LDCs. The Organization has recently provided detailed information on subjects of its competence for the preparation of the updated reports.

6. Although the Organization has no special programme for the LDCs as such, they remain at the centre of FAO's concern in view of their needs; indeed, more than half of the resources allocated to field activities are directed to the LDCs. The recommended measures in the Programme of Action relating to FAO's sphere of competence accord with FAO's basic aims and priorities as established by the Governing Bodies and are virtually all covered under the policies and procedures of the Organization. FAO's Special Action Programmes cover areas of particular interest to the LDCs - food security, seed improvement and development, prevention of pre- and post-harvest losses, soil fertility improvement, animal trypanosomiasis and locust control programmes. Major global initiatives launched by the Organization on rural development, fisheries management and development, pesticides and genetic resources, tropical forests, nutrition, sustainable agriculture and rural development are of direct benefit to the LDCs. LDCs also receive focused attention in the Medium-Term Plan (1992-97) of the Organization.

7. The sections below summarize the current activities and future direction of FAO's support to the LDCs in the areas of the Organization's competence as outlined in the Programme of Action.

### Rural Development

8. The Programme of Action lays particular emphasis on growth with equity and calls for promotion of the participatory development to encourage and support grassroots activities, rural cooperatives and peasants' initiatives. This approach was the main concern of the World

Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) held in 1979 and continues to guide a number of FAO's activities (see also C 91/19). As a follow-up to the WCARRD, FAO-sponsored missions visited a number of LDC countries, (Benin, Ethiopia, Cape Verde, Guinea, Niger, Lesotho, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Bangladesh) at their request, to advise on problems of institutional restructuring, the efficient use of human resources and redefining rural development strategies through projects involving cooperatives and farmers' associations. Studies on access to land, land regularization and land use were also carried out.

9. Human resources development has been a major concern of FAO since its inception. Through participatory extension systems widespread adoption of agricultural techniques and farming practices will continue to be enhanced. National extension programmes have already been designed and strengthened in Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Bangladesh. Group training - an important human resource activity - involved 42 000 trainees in LDCs during 1989 alone.

10. The WCARRD Programme of Action is the framework for a number of participatory programmes launched by FAO covering self-help organizations, disadvantaged rural communities, forestry, small-scale and artisanal fisheries. The Plan of Action for People's Participation in Rural Development has a particular significance for the LDCs. The Strategy adopted by the 1984 World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development stresses the active participation of small-scale fishing communities in the planning and formulation of development activities. People's participation is also a key element of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP) which stresses the need for governments and aid agencies to strengthen the mechanisms for local people's participation, especially by collaborating with local NGOs.

11. The Plan of Action for the Integration of Women in Development, as approved by the FAO Conference in November 1989, is particularly relevant to the LDCs (see also C 91/14). Various mechanisms are being developed at country level to include women as participants and beneficiaries in activities covering animal husbandry, irrigation, extension services and training, particularly in Benin, Guinea, Mauritania, Rwanda and Niger. Other projects involving women's participation include: Rural Women's Demonstration Centres (Burundi); Identifying Training Needs of Agricultural Extension Staff (Ethiopia); Integrated Agricultural Projects for Women Through Community Action (Sierra Leone).

#### Food Security and Disaster Mitigation

12. The sections of the Programme of Action dealing with food security and disaster mitigation, preparedness and prevention correspond fully with FAO's priorities. Many LDCs have traditionally been subject to man-made and natural disruptive events affecting the course of their agriculture and economic development. The Organization fully acknowledges the priority to be accorded to them. The poor food supply situation and frequent severe emergencies give the LDCs clear priority for food security assistance and food aid over other developing countries. Of the resources available under the Food Security Assistance Scheme (FSAS) at the end of 1990, 70% were being utilized in LDCs, of which 95% in the African LDCs. FAO works in close cooperation with the World Bank, both in countries in which the Bank has food security programmes and in those in which FAO is preparing

"Comprehensive Food Security Programmes". A number of LDCs have already benefited from this cooperation, particularly in Africa (Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger and Tanzania). Cooperation in the field of food security has also been developed with other agencies, for example with UNICEF, UNDP and WFP.

13. In order to cope with food shortages and emergency situations, the LDCs need improved information-gathering on food crops and stocks and emergency preparedness planning. FAO, through its Global Information and Early Warning System on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS), is actively involved in monitoring food supply/demand conditions in LDCs and provides technical backstopping to a number of them to establish and/or strengthen their national food information and early warning systems. FAO-supported national early warning projects are in operation in 20 countries in Africa and Asia, 11 of which are LDCs. Preparatory work is under way in a number of other LDCs. Three sub-regional early warning systems are being assisted in Africa (CILSS, IGADD and SADCC\*). The food situation in LDCs is analysed at regular intervals in FAO's special reports, Food Crops and Shortages and Food Supply Situation and Crop Prospects in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in the Food Outlook. FAO issues special alerts to the international community on unfavourable growing conditions and impending food shortages.

14. FAO through its Office for Special Relief Operations (OSRO) responds to requests for emergency assistance, relief and rehabilitation in the agricultural, livestock and fisheries sectors from developing countries affected by natural or man-made calamities. LDCs are also assisted in the establishment of preparedness and post-emergency measures.

15. From 1989 to mid-1991, OSRO implemented 94 projects for a value of about US\$28 million in 16 countries, 13 of which were LDCs. These projects covered activities including the prevention of livestock epidemics, the provision of small agricultural tools and seeds to farmers, the supply of fishery equipment and materials to artisanal fishermen, the construction of adequate storage facilities to prevent the deterioration of food supplies and of agricultural inputs, and the rehabilitation of areas struck by drought, floods, cyclones and volcanic eruptions.

#### Development of Fisheries

16. The development of fisheries serves a multi-functional role in many LDCs, in particular: to augment and/or contribute to the nutritional value of domestic food supply, to create gainful community employment and income as well as to generate foreign exchange for the weak economies of the LDCs.

17. The World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development adopted five Programmes of Action and eight strategies which continue to have positive effects on developing countries in general and LDCs in

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\* CILSS - Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahelian Zone  
IGADD - Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Desertification  
SADCC - Southern African Development Coordination Conference

particular. Three Programmes of Action involving small-scale fisheries, aquaculture development and the alleviation of undernutrition are of particular relevance to the needs of LDCs which, together with the strategies, provide a general framework for FAO's response to their needs. For example, since January 1989, out of a total of 108 projects in Africa, 41 projects were assisting the LDCs.

#### Forestry and Energy

18. The forestry sector makes a vital contribution to the economy and well-being of people of the LDCs. The sector is most important for energy supply as fuelwood and wood biomass constitute the source of more than 60% of all energy consumption in the LDCs. The part of the Programme of Action concerning "the preservation and protection of the environment, including stepped-up efforts for afforestation and the prevention of soil erosion arising from land mis-use or over-use" reflects the objectives of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan (TFAP), which is the first serious international effort to save the tropical forests through an integrated approach.

19. The inter-disciplinary approach of the TFAP which encourages dialogue between technical experts, donors, policy-makers and rural people for the formulation of priorities and projects and exploring ways to finance them, have been of direct benefit to LDCs. For example, in 1990, representatives of the governments of Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Nepal met, under the sponsorship of TFAP, with representatives of donors and agencies to discuss the implementation of the "National Forestry Action Plan" and the follow-up of its recommendations particularly regarding the initiation of programmes and projects and their funding. Forestry review missions involving FAO have been completed or are under way in Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Haiti, Lesotho, Mozambique and Togo. Requests and enquiries were under consideration from Cape Verde, Malawi, Myanmar and Vanuatu. LDCs are now realizing the advantages of planning their forestry sectors and of requesting TFAP's help with macro plans, policies, strategies and resources through donor support.

20. The Programme of Action proposes that LDCs, with the support of donors should, in addition to afforestation and reforestation, develop policies for the efficient use and conservation of energy and the development of their energy capacity. FAO is well aware that the energy shortages lead to a population growth. Unless these conflicts are reconciled, the result could be accelerated natural resource degradation, pollution and contamination.

21. FAO has an integrated approach to energy assessment and planning, based on the need for concerted action by different government agencies and the private sector. This involves the integration of energy into overall agricultural plans and strategies in the LDCs. Such work has started on the basis of case-studies in selected Asian countries and will be extended to cover the LDCs suffering from critical energy supply shortages.

### Environment and Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development

22. The Programme of Action recommends a multi-disciplinary approach in tackling environmental problems. This should cover, inter alia, incentives to motivate better environmental management, education of local communities, developing human resources, addressing poverty eradication, better management of the environment and developing new and renewable sources of energy.

23. Agriculture is the economic sector which most affects and is most dependent on the natural environment. Ecological, economic and social imbalances not only offset the viability of the agricultural sector for the present but also for future generations. The concept of sustainable agriculture and rural development addresses this problem. The Den Bosch Declaration adopted by the FAO/Netherlands Conference on Agriculture and the Environment (attended by representatives from 26 LDCs) recognized the prime responsibility of agriculture to ensure food security for all and agreed that sustainable agriculture should be achieved as part of a dynamic process of rural development (see also C 91/30).

24. The Den Bosch Declaration and Agenda for Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD) was submitted to the Ninety-ninth Session of the FAO Council (June 1991) for guidance and follow-up. The Council recommended that the report of the FAO/Netherlands Conference "should be used as a good basis for the further elaboration of strategies and action proposals in this field, in particular as a major input for the UNCED preparatory process concerning the agricultural sector". The Council fully endorsed the recommendation that FAO develop, in cooperation with partners, an overall International Cooperative Programme Framework (ICPF) to assist in meeting SARD needs at national and international levels and agreed that FAO "had an important comparative advantage in providing policy advice to countries in this field and in the implementation of ICPF/SARD".

25. FAO's approach to agricultural development in the LDCs will take into account the recommendations on sustainable agriculture and rural development arising from FAO's Governing Bodies and the UNCED.

26. Of particular interest to the LDCs in Africa is the International Scheme for the Conservation and Rehabilitation of African Lands developed by FAO as a follow-up to the study, African Agriculture: The Next 25 Years. Adopted by the FAO Regional Conference for Africa at its Sixteenth Session in June 1990, the Scheme sets out to provide a means by which African countries can develop their own programmes to halt land degradation. The Scheme is specifically designed to enable countries to tailor programmes to meet their individual needs.

### Economic and Technical Cooperation between LDCs and Other Developing Countries

27. The Programme of Action recognizes the role of strengthened cooperation between LDCs and other developing countries in their development efforts, particularly in the fields of trade, collaborative ventures, exploitation of natural resources, exchange of information and know-how and technology transfer. FAO's assistance to the LDCs is guided by the priority which economic and technical cooperation among developing

countries (ECDC and TCDC) receives in the work programme of the Organization. Regional and sub-regional cooperation schemes including integration bodies provide natural channels for FAO's support to such cooperation. In the Africa Region, examples of such bodies with which FAO has close collaboration include the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Preferential Trading Arrangement for Eastern and Southern Africa (PTA), the Central African Customs and Economic Union (UDEAC), the West African Economic Community (CEAO) and the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC). Generally, collaboration involves the formulation of agricultural development strategies and agricultural planning within the framework of regional cooperation, identification of mechanisms and procedures for the expansion of intra-regional agricultural trade and assistance in the design and implementation of regional, sub-regional and concerted national food security schemes. FAO's major study on ECDC in agricultural commodity trade is of direct interest to the LDCs.

28. FAO uses several direct means to promote the exchange of information and transfer of technology between LDCs and other developing countries. These include inter-country consultations, training workshops and study tours, expansion of information systems to disseminate data on TCDC potential and opportunities and support to regional institutions and networks. (See also Chapter Eleven of C 91/8.) Transfer of mango processing technology from India to Guinea and of rice and shrimp culture experience from Viet Nam to Guinea-Bissau are among the many examples of FAO-supported activities. Association of Food Marketing Agencies in Eastern and Southern Africa (AFMESA), established with FAO support, promotes collaboration among eight African countries including six LDCs - Ethiopia, Malawi, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. FAO will continue to develop and evolve innovative approaches and modalities to assist the LDCs in taking maximum advantage of complementary capacities available in the developing countries.

### III. FAO Assistance to LDCs in defining Agricultural Development Strategy at Country Level

29. Agricultural development strategy as envisaged in paragraph 86 of the Programme of Action represents a comprehensive agenda covering a wide range of FAO's activities. Under the broad framework of these activities, FAO is already becoming increasingly involved in country policy work, often in the context of structural adjustment programmes.

30. The lessons from FAO's intensive cooperation with the LDCs have formed the basis of far-reaching and realistic studies. Agriculture: Toward 2000 provides a framework for the agricultural development of the developing countries including the LDCs. Another land-mark study, African Agriculture: The Next 25 Years suggests practical measures for the recovery of agriculture in Africa where most of the LDCs are situated. The study focuses mainly on protection and development of natural resources and the improvement of four "I's" of agricultural development: incentives, inputs, institutions and infrastructure. FAO's Price Policy Study, presented to the Conference in 1985, provides guidelines on pricing policies which have direct relevance to the LDCs. FAO's recent work on the preparation of "A Long-term Strategy for the Food and Agriculture Sector", as part of the International Development Strategy (IDS) for the Fourth Development Decade, also has implications for the development of the LDCs. The document focuses on the food and agriculture policies to achieve four

major objectives: economic growth with equity; poverty alleviation and food security; development of human resources and institutions; sustainable development and the environment.

31. To strengthen its policy advisory role FAO has taken the following initiatives which have a direct impact on the LDCs and which FAO will continue to pursue.

#### Country Policy and Structural Adjustment Work

32. The 25th session of the FAO Conference (November 1989) considered that the Organization should focus more closely on sector and sub-sector reviews, and structural adjustment work at country level. Accordingly, the Director-General's Bulletin 90/51 of 22 October 1990 confirmed the need for the Organization to adopt a more active role in sector and structural adjustment work and established an internal mechanism for the promotion and coordination of work in this field. A Country Policy Information System (CPIS), was also created to assemble relevant information on all types of country policy work currently available throughout the Organization. (For details see C 91/21.)

33. FAO's activities within this framework are in conformity with the Programme of Action, and respond to the needs of the LDCs for continuing agricultural policy reform, and monitoring of the impact of micro and macro policies on agricultural performance and rural well-being.

34. Lack of assured funding is a serious constraint in assisting LDCs in analysing their food and agricultural situation in the light of their macro-economic environment and evolving appropriate strategies. While so far the main source of assistance has been the TCP, there is a need for a larger long-term project funded by extra-budgetary resources.

35. At present the World Bank and the IMF have no specific provisions for funding the sectoral work of UN technical agencies associated with structural adjustment programmes (although in FAO's case such work is sometimes carried out under the FAO-World Bank Cooperative Programme of the Investment Centre). However, the new facility for technical support at the programme level (TSS-1) established under the UNDP support costs' successor arrangements could offer a potential source of funding.

36. At the request of Member Governments, FAO has increased its involvement in work related to structural adjustment. This involves the evaluation of the impact of structural adjustment programmes on food and agricultural sectors, assistance in preparing structural adjustment negotiations and donors' round table meetings. In Burkina Faso for instance, within the framework of a structural adjustment Programme negotiated with IMF and World Bank, a TCP project assisted the government in preparing policies as well as a medium-term strategy for improving the performance of the agricultural sector. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, FAO's assistance includes inter alia integrating all requests for policy assistance thereby ensuring consistency among related activities in the country. (For details see C 91/21.)

### Planning and Strategy Formulation

37. FAO's planning assistance projects continue to provide support to LDCs in a number of ways. These projects focus mostly on sector reviews, analysis of agricultural plans, policies and strategies, impacts of policies on rural development and rural incomes.

38. In Bhutan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives and Nepal, technical assistance is provided in policy and planning, while in some regions of Afghanistan emphasis is given to rehabilitation of rural and agricultural communities affected by war. In Bhutan the programme covers accelerated food production, assessing the economic implications of self-sufficiency alternatives and providing advice on policy reforms with bearing on agricultural development activities within the context of the Seventh Five-Year Plan (1992-97). In Burundi, FAO assisted in preparing a round table on strategies and programmes for the rural sector, and the results are used in the preparation of the fifth UNDP Programming Cycle. Ethiopia has been assisted in developing a national food and nutrition development strategy and also in improving the efficiency of decentralized planning which the Government had been trying to promote for some time. In Yemen, a TCP project on Agricultural Planning, Project Analysis, Monitoring and Statistics is being implemented to strengthen the institutional capabilities of the South Region of Yemen (ex PDR Yemen) in those fields. In view of the recent unification of the two Yemens, a project will be initiated to carry out an in-depth review of the agricultural sector, identify development constraints in the two regions, define a common agricultural policy and build up a plan of action for implementation.

### Improving Capabilities in Policy Analysis and Planning

39. Improving the capacity of governments and parastatals in policy analysis is an important aspect of the policy-related work of FAO. A large part of the activities is in the form of training courses, seminars, and workshops and the dissemination of training materials.

40. In the Sudan, a project designed to strengthen the capabilities of the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources in agricultural planning and policy analysis was recently completed. Similarly, large-scale projects for training in local level planning have been recently completed or are under implementation in Niger and Guinea and an expert consultation on village land management is planned in Burkina Faso with the participation of farmers' associations, planning practitioners and training institutes from Sahelian countries. Policy analysis training has been organized in Tanzania through a comprehensive programme covering eight courses and involving local training institutions. Training in policy analysis is also being provided to Botswana, Chad, Togo and Uganda. In the Near East, FAO is currently conducting an annual policy analysis training course in which officials from the Sudan and Yemen participate.

### IV. Cooperation with other Institutions

41. The first UN Conference on the LDCs (1981) underlined the need for improved coordination of aid and for a more efficient conduct of country review meetings. The key role of aid coordination and systematic

organization of the country review meetings under the leadership of LDC governments has been further confirmed by the second Conference.

42. As mentioned earlier, in accordance with the request by the UN General Assembly, FAO submitted a report on the review of food and agriculture in the LDCs during the 1980s. FAO has associated itself with the planning and implementation of the Programme of Action through the assistance it has provided to governments in all phases of the UNDP Round Table process particularly with regard to the agricultural sector consultations at country level. Globally, FAO participates in the inter-agency meetings called by UNCTAD and chaired by the UN, of which the most recent session was held in Geneva on 1 and 2 July 1991. FAO contributes regularly to UNCTAD-coordinated documentation including the replies to a questionnaire every two years, provision of sections of the annual report on LDCs and an agency document for the mid-term reviews (1985 and again called for 1995).

43. Examples of the above-mentioned Round Table related meetings held or planned in 1990-91 with FAO attendance include one on Agricultural and Rural Development in Burundi in November 1990 and on social dimensions of structural adjustment in January 1991. In October 1990, FAO participated at a Round Table meeting on rural development and environment in Lesotho, and is currently involved in preparing a multi-disciplinary mission to Rwanda, scheduled for late 1991.

44. FAO has strengthened cooperation with other institutions in structural adjustment and country policy related work. As a result, there are more opportunities for FAO to participate in UNDP/World Bank Round Tables and Consultative Group meetings on structural adjustment activities. The World Bank has agreed to encourage national governments to use FAO as an executing agency for the technical assistance components of Bank-funded projects, especially in fields of policy capacity building and resource management. Agreement has been reached with the International Monetary Fund on informal exchange of information and documentation and on collaboration on a country-by-country basis.

#### Conclusions

45. The above review raises several important issues. Chief amongst these is recognition that, particularly for the LDCs, an appropriate agricultural development strategy is a key part of the country's overall development policy, along with the international economic environment. It is essential, therefore, that domestic sectoral and macroeconomic policies and allocations of budgetary resources, do not discriminate against agriculture. At the international level, of particular importance are policies related to external indebtedness and resource flows. Resource outflows required to service external debt, much of which is owed to official creditors in the case of the LDCs, severely circumscribe the scope for stimulating agricultural growth through public investment in infrastructural and institutional development. Hence overall economic growth and the introduction of measures to improve access to food, are inhibited. It is reported that in 1989 both concessional (ODA) and total inflows of external financial resources declined to a value equivalent in real terms of that of 1986. Growth of agricultural export earnings of the LDCs which critically affect their debt-servicing capacity, also has been sluggish reflecting the depressed market conditions for many agricultural

commodities. Future growth will depend, inter alia, on the overall conditions governing agricultural trade as well as market access. The design and implementation of the LDCs' agricultural development strategies must take these realities into consideration, but the international community has a clear responsibility to take the necessary steps to ease such external constraints.

46. FAO's regional and perspective studies, such as African Agriculture: The Next 25 Years, and Agriculture: Toward 2000, have indicated the broad lines of agricultural strategies suitable for LDCs to adopt according to their own circumstances. They put emphasis on the use of improved and appropriate technology, institutional and human resources development and environmental considerations.

47. As illustrated in the previous sections of this document, although the Organization has no specific programme for the least developed countries, they are major beneficiaries of a wide spectrum of activities under the Regular and Field Programmes which are fully consonant with the Programme of Action. Within the limits of available resources, and as requested by the least developed countries themselves, FAO will persevere in its efforts to intensify support to such countries in evolving individual agricultural strategies and in carrying out the technical programmes aimed at their implementation.