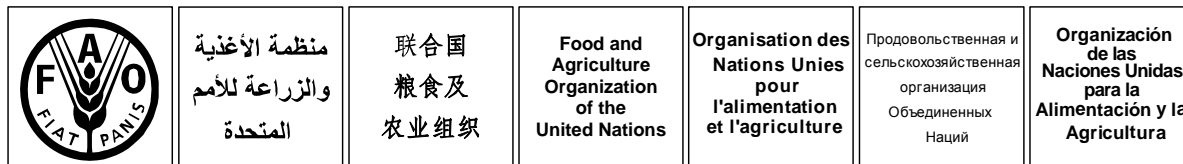


March 2014



Regional Conference for Europe

TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

Bucharest, Romania, 2 - 4 April 2014

Statement by the Chairperson of the 28th Regional Conference for Europe

Chairperson,

Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council,

Excellency's, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of Romania, particularly the Minister for Agriculture and to the people of Romania for their warm welcome and their hospitality. It is an honour for me to speak at this ERC in my capacity as Vice Chair of the 28th ERC.

As a consequence of the FAO reform, the Chair of the previous Conference provides an update on the follow-up to the recommendations as agreed during the European Regional Conference in Baku, which is a perfect opportunity to build the bridge between the 28th ERC in Baku, and the 29th ERC here in Bucharest.

First, I would like to highlight the decisions of the 28th ERC in Baku with the follow-up at other governing body meetings, specifically the FAO Council and the FAO Conference.

The 143th Session of the Council endorsed¹ the

Implementation of Programme of Work and Budget and Areas of Priority Action of the Region.

The Council:

- Confirmed the Regional Results for 2012-13, but also requested a de-emphasising to adhere to the limited resources.
- Confirmed the agreement with the regional trends and supported the six priorities of work for the Region. The Conference requested that these priorities be taken into consideration in the revision of the Strategic Framework and the relevant Medium Term Plan MTP 2014-2017.
- Urged FAO to focus its efforts in areas where it has a comparative advantage, in particular in the dissemination of knowledge and policy advice, technical assistance, capacity building and the facilitation of South-South and Triangular Cooperation.
- Highlighted that FAO could provide effective leadership and establish partnerships with other organizations in the areas within its mandate.

¹ CL144/REP, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/025/me323e.pdf> , paragraph 35 – 37.

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- Suggested that the work of FAO should duly consider cross-cutting issues such as gender, rural youth and indigenous people.

Related to the discussion on Update on the Status and Vision of Decentralization in the Region
the Council endorsed the regional specific conclusions:

- Two fully-fledged FAO Representations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as well as two Assistant FAO Regional posts in Moldova and Uzbekistan should be established and the focus should be put on countries that need most assistance.
- FAO could improve the effectiveness of its assistance and more strategically strengthen the national capacities through the preparation of Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs). They would be prepared in close cooperation with national stakeholders, resource partners, international financial institutions, civil society and the private sector. FAO would assure regular consultation with stakeholders, and coordinate the identification of priorities, planning, programming and monitoring;
- The effectiveness, impact and synergy of regional and sub-regional programmes should be enhanced; FAO would facilitate greater collaboration at (sub)regional level, and engage in close partnerships with (sub)regional entities involved in development and/or humanitarian assistance, including regional economic integration.

Furthermore, the Council endorsed the recommendations of the ERC related to the Multi Year Programme of Work (MYPOW), the recognition of the ERC and the connected role of the European Commission on Agriculture (ECA) as a technical preparation body of the ERC.

I am glad to see a clear follow-up on this because discussions related to the MYPOW and the role of the European Commission on Agriculture are on the agenda for today and tomorrow.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As many of you did, I also participated in the 38th Session of the FAO Conference, and I am pleased to report that it endorsed the report from the 28th Regional Conference and took note of the recommendations it presented.²

1) Related to the Outcome of the 37th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the update on the CFS Reform, the Conference:

- Called for appropriate mechanisms for exchange of views between CFS, member countries and multi-stakeholders;
- Advocated for a clear and common vision for the reformed CFS in order to improve the system on global governance;
- Welcomed the successful conclusion of the CFS-led negotiations on the voluntary guidelines on responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries;
- Noted the development of the global strategic framework for food security and nutrition (GSF);
- Requested that FAO work with appropriate stakeholders to facilitate the development of systems for mapping food security and nutrition action.

2) Related to the Policies for Food Security in the Region: Challenges and Perspectives – Food Outlook towards 2050, the Conference:

- Endorsed the proposal to conduct a FAO/WHO special study on dietary transition and malnutrition in the Europe and Central Asia Region;
- Invited FAO to continue to work on the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) and requested FAO to prepare a study on food waste in the European and Central Asia Region;

² C2013/REP <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/028/mh093e.pdf> , paragraph 38.

- Noted the efforts of several countries in improving food security;
 - Supported an integrated approach to agriculture development.
- 3) **Related to the issue of Land Reform and performance in Europe, the Conference:**
- Requested that FAO engage in shaping policies and providing technical assistance in order to support the re-establishment of extension and advisory services, including legislative frameworks in agricultural associations and farmers' groups
- 4) **Related to Women in Agriculture and closing the gender gap, the Conference:**
- Expressed support for FAO's proposed core set of indicators in agriculture;
 - Noted that closing the gender gap in agriculture may increase yields significantly, and thus contribute to alleviating hunger and poverty;
 - Expressed concern regarding the future of the Working Party on Women and urged the member countries to review and discuss alternative proposals.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The FAO European and Central Asia Region is very heterogeneous. It has some of the richest and some of the poorest countries of the world as members. This makes the work of the organization challenging, although it also provides opportunities.

I would like to emphasise that we should focus on the opportunities. We should focus on the possibilities of strengthening partnerships in the region: namely, partnership with civil society, but also with the private sector.

I am happy to see that both civil society and the private sector is present at this FAO European Regional Conference. The linkage with these partners is vital for the work of the organization in the future.

But it is not only necessary to enhance the partnership with the CSO and the private sector. It is also the partnership between us as members that needs to be improved.

In my capacity as Vice Chair, I speak also on behalf of the Chair of the 28th ERC, we agreed that all countries should be partners and should meet at least once every two years and work together during the inter-sessional periods through the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in order to achieve our common FAO Goals.

I have been interacting with the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia not only as Vice Chair of ERC, but also as Chair of the European Regional Group and I welcome the transparent approach the Regional Office has in its interaction with members.

The Informal Consultations that have been held over the last two years demonstrate this transparency, although we have to admit that there was not always consensus regarding this instrument.

However, I believe it has been proven that it is an important instrument and the agenda of this ERC is one of the products of this process. I would like to encourage the organization and the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia to continue this approach against the background of efficient and effective use of Financial Resources.

Further decentralization of the organization has been accomplished.

However, there is still a lot of work to be done:

Overall, the evaluation of the Regional and Sub-regional Offices in Europe and Central Asia carried out in 2012 concluded that FAO had made efforts to better support member countries in Europe and Central Asia since 2004.

However, the evaluation also highlighted that FAO's corporate decisions on decentralization were not designed for the specific pattern of presence at country level in this region.

Thus, progress in implementation in the Region was by default, partial and hampered by inefficiencies in procedures and mechanisms of delivery and there was no evidence of "enhanced delivery".

And what might be alarming is that FAO's assistance to member countries in the region appeared, at the time of the Evaluation, to have similar strengths and weaknesses before and after the wave of decentralization policies in 2010.

This makes it clear that best priorities cannot be implemented and results cannot be reached if the organization and cooperation is not harmonized among all players.

It is important to make further progress in this regard and the discussion related to Governance, which is one of the agenda items, should touch on some of the issues. The future role of the ECA as well as its connection to the ERC is important for the Region, while another important topic is decentralized offices in the Region.

In concluding my presentation, I would like to look ahead, and would like to highlight:

- 1) The facilitation role of the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia: This is crucial for using existing knowledge, cooperation, dialogue and support. Partners are the Eastern and Western European member countries as well as the private sector and civil society. It is important that the member countries provide support to the Regional Office and its efforts to implement the programme in the Region and I call upon you as members to provide this support through the respective decisions to be taken during this ERC.
- 2) And finally, I would like to emphasise that for the provision of good guidance to the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, but also for the upcoming Council Session and the next FAO Conference our decisions and recommendations must be clear, result oriented and forward looking. This is an important point to consider in the decision making of this FAO ERC, which will be documented by the final report at the end of this meeting.

I look forward to a lively, future oriented and constructive debate and decision making during this Conference. Let me finish by thanking the secretariat for its helpful and substantial support and the work done so far.