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Food and
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para la
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CONFERENCE

Thirty-seventh Session

Rome, 25 June - 2 July 2011

FAO Gender Audit Status Report

Executive Summary

This document gives an overview of:

- the process and objectives of FAO's Gender Audit, commissioned by FAO and carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), now part of UN Women;
- the context for which the audit was commissioned;
- FAO's renewed commitment to gender equality.

The Gender Audit report and recommendations will be presented at the October 2011 Session of the Programme Committee with the Gender Evaluation report and recommendations.

Suggested action by the Conference

The Conference is requested to take stock of work carried out to date on the FAO Gender Audit and the complementarity of this exercise with the house-wide gender evaluation, both of which aim at a better integration of gender issues throughout the Organization.

FAO Gender Audit Status Report

1. The UN has long recognized the importance of gender equality.¹ Over the past two decades the UN General Assembly has passed numerous resolutions calling on UN organizations to integrate gender equality in their programming. In October 2006, the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination adopted the UN System-wide Policy on Gender Equality, which required UN organizations “to pursue the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women... through the coherent and coordinated implementation of gender mainstreaming.” In 2009, the UN Economic and Social Council passed a resolution calling on the Secretary-General to report “on progress made by United Nations entities in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all policies and programmes and in capacity development, including through mandatory training for all staff and personnel and specific training for senior managers, as a critical means of raising their awareness, knowledge, commitment and competencies, as well as with regard to collaborative efforts to ensure effective gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system.”

2. FAO has long recognized the importance of promoting gender equality for achieving global food security and makes all due efforts to comply with the UN resolutions and to integrate a comprehensive approach to gender mainstreaming that would ensure greater overall success.

3. As the FAO State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA) 2010-11 report states, “Achieving gender equality and empowering women is not only the right thing to do; it is also crucial for agricultural development and food security.”² The report estimates how much gender inequalities in the agricultural sector cost nations in terms of agricultural productivity and hunger.

4. Closing the gender yield gap by ensuring that women farmers have the same access as male farmers to productive resources such as land, credit, agricultural inputs and services and information, could boost agricultural production in developing countries by 2.5 to 4 percent. This would reduce world hunger by 12 to 17 percent, an equivalent of 100-150 million people lifted out of hunger worldwide.

5. As mandated by the FAO Conference, in 1989 the Organization embarked on its first Women in Development Plan of Action (1989-1995) and in 2002 its first Gender and Development Plan of Action (2002-2007). However, according to the 2007 Independent External Evaluation (IEE) of FAO, progress in relation to gender equality issues had been slow and uneven and the Organization was “underperforming on gender [equality] compared to the relevance of the subject to much of its mandate.” The IEE noted that gender concerns had yet to be fully integrated throughout FAO’s areas of work, that gender equality was still largely seen as the responsibility of the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW) and that the units other than ESW had still to take their full responsibilities in gender issues. The IEE recommended that FAO give greater emphasis to gender analysis training and that instead of having a separate plan, gender be fully integrated into FAO’s new Strategic Framework. In keeping with this latter recommendation, FAO’s Member Nations created Strategic Objective K (SO K), which calls for gender equity in access to resources, goods, services and decision making in rural areas.

6. FAO commissioned a gender audit in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)/UN Women in 2010 in order to better align itself with UN policies for gender mainstreaming and to be better equipped to achieve SO K. The audit focused on organizational mechanisms, systems and structural issues rather than programme performance, as this was seen as a necessary basis upon which to build a more coherent programme. The Programme Committee of FAO commissioned a gender evaluation that same year as a parallel but separate initiative centered largely on FAO’s programmes, projects and human resources. This evaluation was scheduled for completion

¹ The term “gender equality,” referred to throughout this report, means “a state in which women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life” (FAO, 2009c, p. 4).

² FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture 2011, Women and Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development*, Rome, Italy, 2011.

in April 2011. Together, the two provide a comprehensive analysis of FAO's record and functioning, allowing for a more informed way forward.

7. The objectives of the gender audit were to:

- Identify and analyze the strengths, good practices, weaknesses, gaps and challenges in the institutional mechanisms and processes for gender mainstreaming;
- Assess FAO's institutional capacity for the implementation of its mandate and SO K pertaining to gender mainstreaming;
- Draft an accountability framework to mainstream gender at all levels of FAO and recommend a process to institutionalize the framework; and
- Make practical recommendations on how to strengthen FAO's institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming.

8. The central question for the gender auditors was: What does FAO need to do to adapt its institutional mechanisms and processes to mainstream gender equality throughout the Organization?

9. The audit team completed its work within four months, using a participatory approach and a variety of methodologies, including a document review, an online survey of professional staff and long-term consultants, group discussions with gender focal points (GFPs) and designates, self-assessments and divisional assessments within ESW, interviews and group discussions at headquarters, three regional offices, two sub-regional offices, and three country offices.

10. The Audit ended in December 2010 and produced a report that analyzed the institutional backdrop against which gender issues were currently considered in FAO, and proposed recommendations which would modify current structures in such a way so as to ensure that gender is better integrated throughout the house. FAO has already started acting on some of the recommendations. The audit findings and recommendations will be presented together with the findings from the gender evaluation to the Programme Committee, at its October 2011 session.