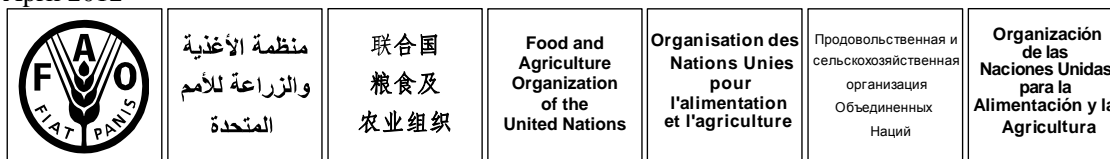


April 2012

**TWENTY-EIGHTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE****Baku, Azerbaijan, 19 and 20 April 2012****Agenda Item 5****Statement by the Chairperson of the 27th Regional Conference for Europe***Chairperson,**Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council,**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Allow me first to express my gratitude to the Government of Azerbaijan and particularly the Minister for Agriculture and to the people of Azerbaijan 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 27th ERC.

Unfortunately, Mr Samvel Avetisyan, the elected Chair of the 27th ERC stepped down from the position in April 2011. I would like to use this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to Mr Avetisyan and his excellent work he carried out as Chair of the ERC. Together with my Vice-Chair colleague – Ms Hedwig Wögerbauer from Austria, I have taken over the task of acting chair of the 27th ERC.

As a consequence of the FAO reform it is the first time in history of the ERC that the Chair of the previous Conference provides an update on the follow-up to the recommendations agreed upon earlier in Yerevan in 2010. I would like to use this opportunity to build with my remarks the bridge between the 27th ERC in Yerevan, and the 28th ERC here in Baku. In my capacity as vice chair of the ERC Yerevan and together with my colleague Ms Wögerbauer from Austria, it was our common understanding to be a veritable partner with REU. Our main foci were issues which have been relevant for the improvement of the work of the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and also to act as a bridge-builder between ERG members and the FAO Secretariat, in general.

I do hope that the elements I bring to your attention help you to get a broader understanding where members could support FAO in delivering the expected organisational results. I will not evaluate the work done by the Secretariat, nor will I enter into Program and Budget matters. For such tasks, we do have competent bodies like the Executive committee of the ECA or the Program- and Finance-Committees. My focus lies mainly on the FAO Reform, which was a central issue during the last Conference in Yerevan.

The Conference Committee for the Follow-up to the Independent External Evaluation (CoC IEE) report, endorsed by the FAO Conference, recommended that the Regional Conferences in 2012 review FAO's country coverage in their Regions, with a view to enhancing the Organization's effectiveness and efficiency at country level.

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At the last (27th) Session of the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC) members expressed their full support for the FAO reform and therefore the full implementation of the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) is expected. In the IPA concrete measures are foreseen regarding new and additional functions of the Regional Conference.

Such new and additional functions are the following:

- to review and make recommendations on FAO/REU performance towards the contribution to results
- to identify priorities and to suggest adjustments for the next biennium; and
- to develop policy issues for the region to be considered also at global level or through additional action at regional level.

A Regional Conference may decide on several priorities and will make relevant recommendations, but without having a well-organized Regional Office, organisational results could not be delivered in an effective and efficient way. For that reason, it was foreseen in the IPA the reform of the Regional Office. This action especially includes new responsibilities and accountability of the reformed Regional Office. In the FAO Jargon Decentralisation is the key word we use for this endeavour. Such new responsibilities for REU include, among others:

- 1) overseeing the country offices, including the management of resources
- 2) managing the non-emergency TCP
- 3) leading the planning, programming and budgeting process
- 4) supervising regional technical officers;
- 5) organizing and servicing the Regional Conferences;
- 6) leading partnerships, particularly with regional organizations; and
- 7) supporting country offices on matters dealing with UN reforms.

More than ever Governments and Stakeholders need guidance and support to find the best way to make a difference. In this regard the best prioritisation, or the best organisational results or most appropriate measure cannot be implemented and be effective, if the institutional setup and the processes are not mutually harmonized among all partners. This fact is especially also valid at the regional level. In this regard and concerning the aforementioned issues, we have to pay special attention to them, which require further serious work done in our region (Evaluation foreseen).

During the last two years the Secretariat of the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) provided information to the above mentioned issues to member countries and organized also an Informal Consultation Meeting in Budapest in January 2012.

It has to be noted that FAO is in the final stage of the process of both implementing the IPA recommendations and moving from activity-based to results-based management. It would be certainly helpful, if the membership could be more involved in these processes, not formally but mainly in a mutually agreed manner. In this regard I would like to refer to a lessons learnt from the FAO Reform process: I quote „*the CoC-IEE's approach was innovative and fruitful, creating the conditions for a meaningful dialogue among Members and with management. The dialogue contributed significantly to building the partnership among Members and between Members and management that is necessary for undertaking broad, deep and long-lasting reforms*”.

Member Nations participation in this process, as well as in the ERC, should be at its highest possible level. In this regard, the guidance of the FAO Conference in 2011 underlined the need for a more active involvement of Member Nations in this crucial phase of the reform implementation.

In concluding my presentation, I would like to look ahead, on the basis of the 2010 recommendations, and would like to summarize my experience in the following three points:

- 1) Reform implementation: strong and further efforts are needed, they must be a focus for Member Nations for the next two years and it is an issue where the Regional Office needs special support and exchange of experiences with Member Nations of ERG and Central Asia.
- 2) Facilitator role of the Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia: very 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 the civil society. Public-private partnerships could have a crucial impact. Strengthening this role of REU will benefit everyone and it will result in efficient and effective realization of what is planned.
- 3) Mr Avetisyan and I have reported the recommendations of the last ERC to the FAO governing bodies. I would like to underline that the modalities of the presentation of the recommendations from the Regional Conferences to the Governing Bodies require serious enhancement, and more substantive presentations and discussion of its recommendations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my last point

- 4) During this Conference, we have several issues to discuss. To provide good guidance to RO and the Governing Bodies our decisions and recommendations must be clear, precise and forward looking. This task is maybe a matter of course, but for me and for the rapid follow-up a very relevant and important point.

Finally I would like to thank you for your attention and your trust in my capacity as Vice-Chair for the 27th ERC. Let me thank ECA Executive Bureau and the secretariat for their very helpful and substantial support and the work done so far. Together with Ms Wögerbauer, I am looking forward to a successful and fruitful debate today.