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## CONFERENCE

### Thirty-eighth Session

Rome, 15-22 June 2013

### FAO Gender Equality Policy and the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (SWAP)

#### Executive Summary

This document updates the Conference on FAO's Policy on Gender Equality, as well the broader framework of the UN System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN SWAP).

#### Suggested action by the Conference

The Conference is requested to take note of the updated information on the FAO Policy on Gender Equality and the UN SWAP.

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## I. FAO Policy on Gender Equality

1. Building on its long-standing dedication to promote gender equity for the achievement of food security, FAO has in recent years renewed its commitment to contribute to women's empowerment in Member States. FAO has continued to gather and disseminate critical knowledge on men's and women's roles and needs in agriculture and food security, with a notable contribution made by the 2010-11 SOFA report on gender<sup>1</sup>.

2. FAO has also carried out critical examinations of its own technical achievements<sup>2</sup> and institutional mechanisms<sup>3</sup> with regards to gender equity, thus identifying lessons learned, and how to build upon past successes.

3. The FAO Governing bodies have underlined the importance of incorporating gender across the spectrum of FAO's work, while taking note in this regard of the Gender Audit and the Evaluation of FAO's role and work related to gender and development<sup>4</sup>.

4. In addition, in 2012 FAO developed its first-ever corporate Policy on Gender Equality, which supports Member Countries in women's empowerment for agricultural development, nutrition and food security.

5. These efforts have taken place concomitantly with those in the broader UN context, which have demonstrated renewed dedication to achieving results with regards to gender equality and women's empowerment, especially through the establishment of UN Women and its leadership in the UN SWAP (see section II).

6. During the 2012-13 biennium, FAO focused on four main areas of activity under the Strategic Objective on gender equity (SO-K):

- a) incorporating rural gender equality considerations into UN policies and joint programmes (e.g. formulation of guidelines: "UN Joint Programmes - Integrating gender issues in food security, agriculture and rural development"; and "Country Programming Framework (CPF) - Integrating gender issues);
- b) enhancing national capacities to incorporate gender and social inequality issues in agriculture, food security and rural development, (e.g. organization of capacity development workshops for national statisticians in the Europe, Africa and Asia and the Pacific regions);
- c) promoting the formulation of gender sensitive policies at national level; and
- d) increasing the commitment and capacity for gender work in FAO (e.g. strengthening the Gender Focal Point system at FAO headquarters and in decentralized offices, including training sessions for FAO staff).

7. The development of a corporate policy dedicated to gender equality, as well as FAO's sustained efforts and attention to related issues have culminated in the enhancement of gender as a cross-cutting theme underlying all of the Organization's Strategic Objectives for the future focus of its work within the reviewed Strategic Framework.

8. **The FAO Gender Equality Policy**<sup>5</sup> was endorsed by the Director-General on 8 March 2012. As an organization which specialises in agricultural development, gender considerations are an important element for FAO in pursuit of its mandate of supporting the attainment of food security for all. The policy outlines the corporate commitment to addressing gender in FAO's technical and

<sup>1</sup> FAO *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11, Women and Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development*, Rome, Italy, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> FAO Gender Evaluation

<sup>3</sup> FAO Gender Audit

<sup>4</sup> CL 143/3, CL 144/3

<sup>5</sup> FAO Policy on Gender Equality: Attaining Food Security Goals in Agriculture and Rural Development (2012) - DGB 2012/16

advocacy work in support of Member Countries. It is also aligned with international conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and over-arching UN declarations including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHR). The policy was developed as a result of broad internal consultation at headquarters and at decentralized locations, as well as in contact with external partners such as other Rome-based Agencies and UN Women.

9. The policy also outlines a strategy to ensure that FAO systematically addresses gender dimensions in its work. It specifies an overall gender goal targeting equality in sustainable agricultural production and rural development in pursuit of hunger eradication and poverty alleviation. It also contains gender objectives, two of which contain initial quantitative measures to be achieved. In addition, the policy delineates the requisite institutional mechanisms and structure to implement the policy and oversee its application.

10. FAO is pursuing a two-pronged strategy in pursuing its gender objectives:

- a) FAO will mainstream gender-related considerations across its technical work. The Organization systematically examines and addresses women's and men's needs, conditions and experiences as part of its development of policies, programmes and projects in Member Countries. It also pursues specific programmes and projects for women's empowerment in support of food security.
- b) The Organization will bolster its capacity for advocacy dedicated to gender-related issues to support member countries in incorporating gender perspectives in their development policies and activities.

11. The policy defines the institutional mechanisms and processes for its implementation in the following areas: capacity development; knowledge building; communication; partnerships; culture change; monitoring and reporting; evaluation; audit and oversight.

12. The plan to implement the policy will be adjusted as required within the context of FAO's reviewed Strategic Framework, in particular in the following areas: i) strengthening gender perspectives in the new Strategic Objectives, and in field programmes, ii) capacity development initiatives on gender in Member States, and iii) more effective monitoring and reporting, including by use of gender-disaggregated food security statistics.

13. An increasing number of FAO offices/divisions are addressing gender dimensions relevant to their normative work, programmes and projects in order to better serve Member States. For example, 15 offices/units completed gender stock-taking exercises both at HQs and in decentralized offices, and at least 5 offices/units are in the process of starting or undertaking stock-taking exercises. The Gender Focal Point network has also been re-invigorated and it is an important mechanism in the implementation of the policy. A total of 48 Gender Focal Points and alternates at headquarters and 68 in decentralized offices have been appointed and they allocate 20 percent of their time to gender-related functions. In line with the Adjustments to the PWB 2012-13 approved by the 143<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Council, all of FAO's Regional Offices are re-instating the regional gender positions.

14. An additional area of work that is contributing to implementing the policy is a strategy to develop capacities for gender dimensions in food security and agriculture, which was finalized in December 2012. The strategy aims at developing sustainable capacities in Member States and FAO staff to promote gender perspectives in agriculture and food security while building on evolving practices in the international development community. The expected result is to develop lasting capacities at national and regional level and respond to the changing needs of Member States and FAO staff.

15. The policy also includes an accountability framework which identifies the responsibilities of the different entities in the organization, both within the Secretariat and for the governing bodies.

16. Substantial implementation of the policy will be undertaken through the cross-cutting theme on gender across all the Strategic Objectives in the reviewed Strategic Framework and the policy itself may be enhanced and adjusted within the overall context of the Organization's strategic direction.

Gender outputs and outcomes will be identified in the implementation of the Programme of Work in 2014-15 as work on gender will be mainstreamed across the new Strategic Objectives. Work on gender will be monitored as part of the corporate programme monitoring and reporting.

17. Resource allocation for gender work in the Programme of Work and Budget 2014-15 will remain at the level previously budgeted under SO-K in 2012-13. The resources allocated to SO-K in the 2012-13 biennium more than doubled from USD 9.8 million in the 2010-11 biennium (1 percent of the net appropriation) to USD 21.8 million in 2012-13 (2.1 percent of the net appropriation)<sup>6</sup>. This level of resources for work in gender will be maintained for the 2014-15 biennium.

## **II. The UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (UN SWAP)**

18. The UN has long recognized the importance of gender-related considerations. The UN Charter refers to equality between men and women in its preamble. Over the past two decades, the UN General Assembly has passed numerous resolutions calling on UN organizations to integrate gender in their policies and programmes. In October 2006, the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) adopted the UN System-wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (CEB/2006/2), 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 (ECOSOC) 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,... 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."* In 2012, these commitments were reiterated.

19. In 2011-12, UN Women coordinated the development of the UN SWAP framework<sup>7</sup>, which is the first accountability framework across UN agencies on gender and women's empowerment. In July 2012, the ECOSOC passed a resolution welcoming the UN SWAP and calling upon the United Nations system to actively engage in its implementation.

20. FAO submitted its first official report to UN Women in February 2013, following a broad internal consultation. The consolidated UN SWAP annual report will be submitted by the Secretary-General to the ECOSOC on Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System. The first 2013 report will provide the starting point for further progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment, as entities and agencies pursue their individual policies within the broader UN context.

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<sup>6</sup> CL 145/3 table 2.

<sup>7</sup> UNSWAP Framework:

<http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/UN-SWAP-Framework-Dec-2012.pdf>