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PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

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NOTE ON "RESPONSIBILITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HEADQUARTERS AND DECENTRALIZED OFFICES UNDER THE REFORM"

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The note reflects the current status of internal consultations within the FAO Secretariat on the issue of responsibilities and relationships between headquarters and decentralized offices under the reform.

It provides an overview of the different levels of delegation of authority from the Director-General to Regional Representative (RRs) and FAO Representatives (FAOReps) and from RRs to Sub-regional Representatives (SRCs) and the functional guidance/accountability relationship for officers located in decentralized offices. Summarizing, RRs and FAOReps report to the Director-General, SRCs report to RRs, and all decentralized offices have functional relationships with the TC Department, the Shared Services Centre (SSC) and relevant technical departments at headquarters. Corporate coordination is provided by OCD that monitors the effectiveness of communication and mutual understanding of the Organization's mission, objectives and programmes among the various layers of the decentralized structure.

One of the main objectives of the Reform is to improve the effectiveness of FAO as knowledge organization, the synergy between the operational and normative aspects of FAO's work through greater recognition of "normative" work in support of regional and subregional organizations and the importance of field activities as FAO's key knowledge base. Therefore, all units and officers in any location need to exchange and learn from each other's experiences, through enhanced teamwork; i) between FAORs and the Multi-disciplinary Team (MDT) in Sub-regional Offices (SROs); ii) between SROs and Regional Offices (ROs); and iii) between headquarters and decentralized offices..

The value of a specialized agency like FAO is in its ability to draw upon knowledge and best practices networks in the organization and in member countries for adaptation and application to specific global and country needs. This is facilitated by the progressive adoption of modern information technology, that has made technical work in FAO gradually more location-independent.

Moreover, it is important to ensure that FAO not only provides high quality technical assistance, but also applies its scarce resources in accordance with the recipient member country's priorities so as to achieve optimal impact. This will be made possible through increased interaction between officers at headquarters, ROs, SROs and FAORs and a clear understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities.

Introduction

1.   This note reflects the current status of internal consultations within the FAO Secretariat on the issue of responsibilities and relationships between headquarters and decentralized offices under the reform. The challenge is to ensure that FAO, in the context of a reduced regular budget, enhance its normative work while, at the same time, responding more readily to requests for technical cooperation and emergency assistance, as highlighted by the Independent Evaluation of FAO's Decentralization.

2.   This note explains the relationships that units and officers will have with each other and is not intended to provide an extensive overview of the terms of reference of the concerned units. It would need to be further operationalized, in particular with regard to revised work planning and budgeting responsibilities, before it can be implemented.

3.   Many of the proposals in this note will require considerable organizational learning. The lessons to be learned from implementing the relationships proposed herewith in the pilot region of the reform will lead to regular updating of the responsibilities and relationships.

The line of command vs. functional relationships.

4.   Article VII.4 of the constitution of FAO states: *"Subject to the general supervision of the Conference and the Council, the Director-General shall have full power and authority to direct the work of the Organization."*

5.   The Director-General exercises his authority outside of headquarters by delegating it to: (i) Regional Representatives (RRs); and (ii) FAO Country Representatives (FAOReps), who report back to him. RRs delegate the part of their mandate concerning the provision of policy, technical and operational support to individual countries and Regional Economic Integration Organizations (REIOs) to Subregional Coordinators (SRCs) who report back to the RR. This is the main line of command, and the wording "supervises/reports to" will be used in this note to refer to this vertical line of authority between headquarters and decentralized offices.

6.   At the same time, the Director-General also delegates authority to the ADGs at headquarters who set policies and standards that apply to the entire Organization, irrespective of location. Headquarters departments will, in their mandated areas, also have a mechanism to guide decentralized offices and officers. Thus, the challenge of the FAO Secretariat is:
- to coherently apply the guidance of its governing bodies and the directives of its Director-General, through the line of command;
- to ensure that positions, policies and standards developed by headquarters departments, outside of the vertical line of command, are also effectively applied;
- to respond adequately in a timely manner to requests for support from its developing member countries and their subregional and regional organizations. This requires lateral linkages to allow a multi-disciplinary approach to development issues. It also necessitates that effective guidance by decentralized offices, on country, subregional and regional needs and priorities, is integrated into corporate decision-making.

7.   It is thus necessary to distinguish, apart from the vertical delegations of authority from the Director-General to RRs and FAOReps and from RRs to SRCs, the functional guidance/accountability relationship that exists when an officer in a decentralized office is to

apply a policy precept, procedure or rule that is part of another department's mandate. Functional relationships complement the line of command and do not undermine it. In this note, the wording "provide functional guidance/is accountable to" will be used to express a functional relationship.

8.   Functional guidance can be from headquarters to decentralized offices but also, if FAO is to respond swiftly to decentralized priorities, from decentralized offices to headquarters. Organizational learning must be between top and bottom but also from peer to peer. Like other public and private global organizations, FAO will make full use of the Internet and other information and communication technology to achieve continuous problem solving by its globally distributed professional staff. Rather than proposing strict adherence to reporting and accountability lines, this note merely proposes a framework which does justice to the complexity of the Organization's mission and, most importantly, leads to efficient decision-making that will increasingly be of a networked nature.

9.   Hence, within the framework provided by the Director-General's main delegations of authority, units/officers may have multiple "functional relationships".

10.   The following examples aim to clarify the concept of functional relationships:
- the ADG/TC delegates budget holdership for projects to officers outside the TC Department, both at headquarters and in decentralized offices. Such officers are accountable to the ADG/TC for operating the project and reporting on it in accordance with standards prescribed by the TC Department;
- FAOReps may be requested to deal with country-level activities in the context of normative programmes that fall under the mandate of a headquarters technical division. In doing so, they will be accountable for applying FAO's technical quality standards or policy precepts under the guidance of the concerned headquarters division. Conversely, headquarters departments will build on advice from the FAORep on countries' needs and priorities;
- Administrative officers and budget holders anywhere in the world follow the functional guidance of the Shared Services Centre (SSC) on administrative servicing matters (i.e. human resources, administration, financial processing, travel and ORACLE user support) following the procedures of the FAO Manual, Administrative Circulars, etc.

Normative/operational synergy through increased decentralization

11.   Decentralization has been endorsed by the membership as a particularly effective manner of delivering FAO's programmes. Increased decentralization and a refined pattern of delegations and functional relationships, are expected to enhance the synergy between the operational and normative dimensions of FAO's programme of work. This is only possible if there is more interaction between officers at headquarters, ROs, SROs and FAORs.

12.   The value of a specialized agency like FAO is in its ability to learn from around the world, and to draw upon best practice in different locations for adaptation and application to specific country needs. Therefore, all units and officers need to exchange and learn from each other's experiences.

13.   For instance, the SRCs supported by their multi-disciplinary team (MDT), and with occasional inputs from the RO and headquarters, will have a pivotal role in orchestrating the technical and operational support to FAOReps, REIOs and the related projects. Peer support between FAOReps and the SRO's MDT including direct interactions will be a main feature of the new operating model. The collective views of the SRC and FAOReps in the subregion will carry more weight in corporate decision-making than that of isolated FAOReps did in the past. Thus, the Organization can build up country-specific expertise with the FAOReps providing the appropriate country focus and the MDT staff providing critical mass of expertise in a manner that is directly relevant to hunger, poverty and agricultural development challenges of the countries in the subregion.

14.   FAO must not only provide high quality technical assistance, but its scarce resources must also be applied in accordance with the recipient country's priorities so as to achieve optimal impact. FAOReps are progressively preparing, together with the MDT and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT), National Medium-term Priority Frameworks (NMTPFs) to set priorities for government/FAO collaboration and, to achieve a timely, focused, team-driven and multi-disciplinary FAO support to food and agricultural development at country level. This will allow greater alignment of FAO's field work with national priorities, as expressed in the poverty reduction strategies, and ensure more coherent involvement and support to the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and improve the impact and visibility of FAO's contribution to the achievement of the World Food Summit goal and the Millennium Development Goals.

15.   In this context, it is necessary to ensure that the incentive structure for FAOR staff and MDT officers is geared towards servicing country and subregional priorities rather than regional and global ones. While the FAOReps have a leading role in the formulation and implementation of the NMTPFs, the SRC and MDT members should be fully briefed on the NMTPF approach and modalities to allow effective teamwork around jointly shared country assistance priorities.

16.   The RRs will play a pivotal role in setting regional priorities and ensuring the coherence between global, regional, subregional (and the underlying country) priorities. In this context, they will lead the region's contributions to the MTP, PWB and annual work planning processes, contribute to other programming/budgeting documents (Strategic Framework, Programme Implementation Report, etc.) and prepare frameworks for FAO's collaboration with regional organizations and guide regional resource mobilization policies.

17.   MDTs cannot provide all the required technical specializations as the number of posts they have is limited. Therefore, the RO and MDTs will share and exchange the services of technical officers and FAOReps with the necessary expertise. RRs will lead a team composed of the RR and the SRCs that will coordinate, in close collaboration with the parent departments, the exchange of highly specialized disciplines between headquarters, the RO and the SROs. Thus, a mutually supported relationship between FAOReps, SCRs, RRs and headquarters can be guaranteed.

18.   At the same time, the normative work, especially those aspects involving collaboration with regional and subregional organizations, will be facilitated by the RR and SRCs advising on the priorities for FAO's support to these organizations, which will facilitate the formulation of regional and subregional normative programmes. They will be in a good position to ensure that lessons learned from operational work at country level feed back into regional and global normative work and that corporate know-how feeds into the support that FAO provides at the country level.

19.   In addition, with the progressive adoption of modern information technology, technical work in FAO becomes gradually more location-independent. This enables the Organization to take a fresh look at its decentralized structure. Using e-mail and tele-conferencing, technical officers can, more than in the past, maintain effective working relations with officers in the same discipline, thus establishing networked global teams that thrive on peer exchange rather than hierarchy. Thus decentralized staff will be able to draw upon the best practices available from around the world.

20.   Furthermore, regular rotation of officers between ROs, SROs and headquarters will greatly enhance the global coherence of technical programmes as these officers will apply their expertise, throughout their careers, from different perspectives (global, regional, subregional).

21.   Moreover, the availability of the new information technologies also ensures that officers, irrespective of their location, can maintain close contact with their parent departments at headquarters, who are responsible for ensuring that officers under their purview, satisfy the

highest professional and technical standards and benefit from regular rotation and, where necessary, are provided with appropriate training opportunities. This will also apply to FAOReps, who are to devote up to 30 percent of their time to technical work.

22.   Additionally, the work of technical officers in ROs and SROs is facilitated by increasing the non-staff resources, that they can control, to perform their duties. In this regard, significant progress has already been achieved in increasing the allocation of non-staff resources per decentralized technical officer in the PWB.

23.   With the benefit of information technology, the normative work concerning regions, which used to be undertaken at headquarters, is better performed in the ROs with technical departments maintaining direct supervision of their technical officers. This enables the Organization to take advantage of the cost differential between Rome and the ROs' locations.

24.   The technical officers who primarily support normative work from regional perspectives are naturally placed in ROs, and those that support the country programmes and REIOs are in the SROs. As the Organization loses a critical mass of expertise at headquarters, due to budget reductions, it must optimize the global use of its networked decentralized expertise within available resources to service its normative programme, not only at a global level, but also at regional/subregional levels, while at the same time improving the relevance, timeliness and technical quality of its response to requests for technical cooperation.

New roles and relationships of decentralized offices under the reform

FAO COUNTRY REPRESENTATIONS (FAORS)

25.   Under the new operating model, the role of FAORs and their relationships with SROs will change as FAOReps will become members of the subregional MDTs for up to 30 percent of their time. They will undertake technical support assignments to neighbouring countries in the subregion and receive technical support from other FAOReps and technical officers in the SRO. This will change the relationship between FAORs that will be characterized by increased peer support and between FAOReps and SROs who will increasingly operate as a team within a global network evolving the FAOReps, SROs, ROs and headquarters departments.

26.   FAOReps lead FAO's response to countries' needs. In close collaboration with the SRO and the UNCT, they set priorities for government/FAO collaboration through the NMTPF and UNDAF processes. They report to the Director-General through OCD, and supervise the other staff of the office. They communicate directly with all units, irrespective of location, involved in their country/ies of accreditation. While keeping to their well-established functions (development of the NMTPF, advocacy and representational roles and assisting in leveraging resources), they have the following functional relationships:

- for their time devoted to technical issues in the subregion as members of the subregional MDT, they are accountable to the SRC;
- they provide functional guidance on country assistance priorities to all units/officers in the Organization and, in particular, advise the SRC in this regard;
- they receive functional guidance from the departments at headquarters on matters within the purview of the mandated areas of the departments concerned, in particular they are accountable to:
    - the ADG/TC or other officials (e.g. project budget holders) as delegated by the ADG/TC for field programme development and operational activities;
    - the ADG of the concerned technical department or other departmental officials as delegated by the concerned ADG for supporting normative work at subregional level, at the request of headquarters technical departments;

- they provide functional guidance to all FAO staff in the country on advocacy, policy, security and general managerial issues within the framework of established policies and procedures;
- for administrative servicing matters, they receive functional guidance from the SSC.

REGIONAL OFFICES (ROS)

Regional Representatives (RRs)

27.   The RRs address region-wide issues and lead the support to regional organizations, commissions and bodies. They report to the Director-General through OCD. They supervise the SRCs in their region, and provide managerial/administrative support to outposted technical staff in the RO who will continue to be supervised by their parent department for their normative technical work. RRs have the following functional relationships:

- provide functional guidance to headquarters departments/independent offices on the most appropriate ways to integrate regional and the underlying subregional and country priorities in FAO's strategies, policies, programmes and projects;
- provide functional guidance on managerial and administrative issues to technical officers in the RO. He/she supports them in maintaining direct, regular contacts with management and officers of their parent department, both at headquarters and in other decentralized offices;
- accountable to the departments and independent offices at headquarters on matters within the purview of the mandated areas of the department/office concerned, in particular they are accountable to:
  - the ADG/TC (or other officials delegated by the ADG/TC) for field programme development and operational activities;
  - the ADG of the concerned technical department or other departmental officials as delegated by the concerned ADG for supporting normative work at subregional level, at the request of headquarters technical departments;
  - the SSC for administrative servicing matters.

Technical officers in the ROs

28.   Outposted technical officers in ROs perform mainly normative work with a regional perspective. They also play a role in developing the field programme and they may, at the request of FAOReps or SRCs, undertake technical backstopping missions. They report to their parent department, and on managerial and administrative matters they are accountable to the RR.

SUBREGIONAL OFFICES (SROS)

Subregional Coordinator (SRC)

29.   The SROs are part of the ROs (therefore the title of "coordinator" rather than "representative"). The SRCs and their MDTs support FAORs and, through the latter, the UNCTs, and also lead FAO's response to the needs of subregion-wide organizations including REIOs. They will have the resources required, and the RR will delegate to SRCs the authority necessary, to provide policy and technical assistance to the countries in the subregion, upon request from the FAOReps, without having to refer to the RO or headquarters for most of the transaction approvals.

30.   The SRCs[1] work under the delegated authority of, and hence report to, the RR of their region. In particular, they advise the RR on the most appropriate ways to integrate subregional and the underlying country priorities in FAO's regional strategies, policies, programmes and

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[1] SRCs will also be accredited as FAOReps in the host country of the SRO. Where this accumulation of responsibilities leads to excessive workload they will delegate tasks to the members of MDT and other professionals in the SRO.

projects. They supervise the technical officers in the SRO's MDT and have the following functional relationships:

- they are accountable to departments and independent offices at headquarters for matters within the purview of the mandated areas of the departments/offices concerned, in particular they are accountable to:
  - the ADG/TC (or other officials delegated by the ADG/TC) for field programme development and operational activities;
  - the ADG of the concerned technical department or other departmental officials as delegated by the concerned ADG for supporting normative work at subregional level, at the request of headquarters technical departments;
  - the SSC for administrative servicing matters.
- they provide functional guidance to FAOReps in relation to their role as member of the MDT (for up to 30 percent of the FAORep's time);
- they provide functional guidance to all units in the Organization on the needs and priorities of the subregion and the subregion-wide organizations, including REIOs.

Technical officers in SROs

31.   Technical officers in SROs mainly provide technical support – both normative and operational – to the countries of the subregion, through the FAORs, and to subregion-wide organizations. They also play a role in developing the field programme. They report to the SRC with the following functional relationships:

- on matters concerning the general technical soundness, quality and impact of their work, the preparation of PWB proposals and in undertaking tasks of a normative nature they are accountable to their parent department at headquarters;
- on matters concerning particular project technical backstopping assignments they are accountable to the project's budget holder and the project's lead technical unit;
- on matters concerning FAO's overall priorities, advocacy positions and policies in a particular country, they are accountable to the FAORep concerned.

Role of headquarters technical departments

32.   Headquarters technical departments are responsible for assessing the quality and impact of the Organization's technical work at all locations and for proposing/implementing measures and mechanisms for maintaining appropriate standards and achieving impact. They ensure that officers under their purview, irrespective of location, satisfy the highest professional and technical standards, and have the competence and judgement to apply FAO corporate approaches. They supervise technical officers in the ROs and provide functional guidance to technical officers in the subregional MDTs. They ensure appropriate mobility and training that allows technical officers to apply their disciplinary specialization from different perspectives (global, regional, subregional and country levels) throughout their careers and that also allows appropriate collaboration between decentralized offices and headquarters to direct scarce expertise to where it is most needed.

33.   It is the responsibility of the department to provide regular information to the officers in decentralized offices on relevant developments in their technical area and on FAO's corporate position on technical issues and to ensure consistency between regions. Conversely, it is the responsibility of each technical officer to maintain regular contact with his/her parent division and to actively seek guidance on FAO's corporate position on technical issues.

34.   Through the supervision of technical officers in ROs, technical departments will retain direct involvement also in FAO's normative work at regional level.

35.   In accordance with recent discussions on aid harmonization (Paris Declaration), priorities for government/FAO collaboration at country level will be set by FAORs, through the NMTPF

and UNDAF processes, in close collaboration with the UNCT and the SRO. Technical departments, through their officers in the subregional MDT, will retain an important role in guaranteeing that international best practice and appropriate technical standards and methodology are applied to food and agricultural development at country level.

Corporate coordination

36.   OCD monitors the effectiveness of communication and mutual understanding of FAO's mission, objectives and programmes among the various layers of the decentralized structure including two-way communication and feedback to the decision-making, programming and planning processes. It facilitates understanding of Senior Management guidance and policy directives at all levels. It identifies emerging coordination issues, provides continuous guidance and briefing on issues concerning responsibilities and relationships, and intervenes directly through mediation, facilitation and arbitration as appropriate, with guidance from senior management as necessary.

Relationships regarding RP programming and budgeting

Treatment of Regional and Sub-regional Priorities

37.   The present planning and programming arrangements would benefit from stronger links between FAO's global work on the one hand, and the requirements of individual countries, groups of countries and regions on the other. To ensure that FAO's work at global, regional, subregional and country level is mutually reinforcing, and assure more effective delivery of programmes through the decentralized offices, the following enhancements are contemplated.

- NMTPFs would be considered by RRs in the formulation of FAO's activities at regional level, together with the results of the Regional Conferences, and the outcome of FAO's collaboration with the REIOs and other regional bodies and commissions;
- prior to finalising programmes and resource allocations, decentralized management perspectives and/or regional priorities and their relationship to global work would be given more interactive consideration than at present.

Planning for the MTP and PWB

RO

- Regional contributions to medium term plans and programme of work proposals, in terms of priorities to be addressed, outputs to be produced and associated resources under programme entities, are discussed more interactively than at present, and agreed with the technical division concerned, contributing to improved mutual understanding of the normative issues and related regional priorities;
- HQ Departments remain responsible for formulating programme entities in the MTP, and planning the number, level and profile of technical posts in the ROs during the PWB process, responding to the guidance provided by the RR and in close consultation with regional technical officers;
- Technical officers in the RO propose the allocation of staff time and non-staff resources to programme entities, in consultation with HQ technical departments and under the functional guidance of the RR.

SRO

- SRC, proposes the level and profile of technical posts and the allocation of staff and non-staff resources to programme entities, in consultation with FAORs, the MDT and the respective HQ Departments, building on the NMTPFs and collaborative frameworks with the REIOs.

FAORs

- The overall planning for the network of country offices posts, non-staff resources and income remains the responsibility of OCD;
- the SRCs provide advice on the profiles of the FAO Reps and FAOR staff in their respective sub-regions.

Allotments for implementation

- ROs - Allotments are provided to the regional offices concerned) for use by the implementing technical officers; budget fungibility rules will ensure that resources planned against technical programmes are available for expenditure for those technical programmes through a formal workplan agreed with HQ technical departments;
- SROs - Allotments are provided to the SRO and expended according to a workplan to be agreed with the FAORs;
- FAORs – Allotments are provided to each FAOR directly by OCD.