



Members' Update

FAO renewal



Good progress reported on restructuring

Restructuring of FAO headquarters is on schedule with changes aiming to allow greater focus on the strategic framework and objectives.

The Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal called for a comprehensive reorganization of headquarters, to be initiated in 2009. The structure will be refined through 2012, following consultation between management and the governing bodies.

The driving principles of the changes include more effective management and delegation, fewer “silos”, more representation of decentralized offices in decision-making, and more sharing of services with UN partner agencies.

As recommended by the “Root-and-Branch Review” of FAO business processes, a new executive management team will be led by the Director-General as chief executive officer. It will include the two deputy directors-general and the assistant director-general / directeur de cabinet, representing both the knowledge base of the Organization and the operational aspects of its work.

“These changes will allow more focus on the strategic framework and strategic objectives, and improve programme coherence in the delivery of FAO services,” said Tony Alonzi, director of human resources. “This is a major restructuring, yet we have made good progress and are on schedule.”

The new structure reduces to seven the number of direct reporting lines to the Director-General.

Before the structure was approved by FAO Conference in late November 2009, management submitted two analytical documents to the joint meetings of working groups 1 and 3 of the Conference Committee, with functional statements for the major units as well as clarifications in response to queries from Members.

The restructuring has been guided by continuing dialogue between Members and management.

Alonzi confirmed the pivotal role of Members in the restructuring.

"They have been with us all the way through and made good suggestions in helping to move the process forward," he said.

New year brings switch in renewal emphasis

The new year sees a switch in emphasis in the renewal process – as major projects in the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal move from planning to implementation.

Members will have a monitoring role while management is tasked with ensuring changes in areas including results-based management, staff performance evaluation, administrative systems and decentralization are moved forward.

A Committee of the Conference has been created for 2010-11, reporting to the FAO Conference in 2011.

Marcela Villarreal, outgoing chairperson of the Reform Support Group, said that while the body would carry the same name as the current Conference Committee, its role would be different.

"It will be different in terms of mandate and structure," she explained. "Its mandate will be focused on providing overall monitoring and follow-up of the implementation of the IPA, in addition to guidance for any required improvement.

"This is reflective of a change in emphasis. Now that the IPA is fully funded and all of its actions started on solid ground, the focus is on management's responsibilities in bringing through the changes with less day-to-day involvement of Members."

The Committee will meet less frequently – up to three times a year – and its structure will be simpler, with no distinct working groups and no dedicated secretariat.

At the same time, the Programme and Finance Committees and the Council will continue to provide inputs. The Council will monitor overall progress on implementation of the IPA and will report to the Conference in 2011. It will receive progress reports from management on IPA implementation, for its review and guidance. Under this new arrangement, the Independent Chairperson of the Council will play an active, facilitating role.

Comments? Suggestions? Write to Members-Update@fao.org.