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FINANCE COMMITTEE

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**Progress Report on Implementation of the Human Resources Strategic
Framework and Action Plan**

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

Ms Monika Altmaier

Director, Office of Human Resources

Tel: +3906 5705 6422

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- At its 154th Session in May 2014, the Committee was provided with the new Human Resources Strategy together with an updated Action Plan.
- Since May 2014, progress on projects and activities and consolidation of newly introduced human resources processes and initiatives has been made, as detailed in the present progress report. As requested by the Committee, updates are provided on the alignment of decentralised offices with the corporate HR strategy; vacancy rates; retention measures for JPO and APOs; automation of HR processes by better use of available systems such as GRMS, and the implementation of internal controls for workforce planning.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

- Members of the Finance Committee are invited to take note of progress on human resources initiatives.

Draft Advice

- **The Committee took note of the progress on human resources initiatives and of the specific updates that were requested by the Committee at its 154th Session in May 2014, namely on the alignment of decentralized offices with the corporate HR strategy; vacancy rates; retention measures for JPO and APOs; automation of HR processes by better use of available systems such as GRMS, and on the implementation of internal controls for workforce planning.**
- **The Committee took note of the Progress Report on the Implementation of the Human Resources Strategic Framework.**

1. Since the 154th Session of the Finance Committee in May 2014, progress on a number of human resources initiatives and recently introduced new or revised processes has been made. A summary of achievements is presented below.

Overview of current human resources initiatives

Performance Management - Competency Framework - Generic Job Profiles -

2. A review of the Performance Evaluation and Management System (PEMS) process was conducted in May 2014 with the support of external consultants. A series of recommendations for improvements to the existing process were put forth, while capitalizing on the efforts made to date to implement a performance management process in the Organization. The recommendations have been reviewed by Senior Management and are being included in a revised performance management policy framework. The new performance management policy framework will not only update the performance management process, but also provide for mechanisms that recognise high-performance and address under-performance, as well as introduce a rebuttal process. As indicated in our previous report, the target date for the introduction and implementation of the revised process and related policy is the start of 2015.

3. The Competency Framework was introduced at the start of 2014 and integrated in a number of human resources management processes. Work is on-going to promote its use and improve the understanding among staff and managers. In addition, professional selection panel members have now been trained in the use of competency-based interview techniques to support the revised recruitment process. Indeed, in line with best practices, the new recruitment processes for professional staff, international officers and national professional officers provide for the systematic use of competency considerations in interviewing candidates.

4. As previously indicated, generic job profiles have been developed for circa 80% of general service posts and 60% of professional posts. Since the last Finance Committee session, internal guidelines have been developed to provide an overview of the purpose and procedures for the introduction of the generic job profiles in FAO as a management tool that will further increase the efficiency of human resources management by simplifying and streamlining classification, and support vacancy announcement processes, as well as staff mobility.

Appointment and Selection Procedures - iRecruitment - Rosters

5. As noted above, revised selection and appointment procedures for professional staff, international and national, on regular budget funded positions were introduced at the end of May 2014. The processes provide for a much more active role of Human Resources at every step of the process, the systematic use of competency-based interviews, as well as more consistent use of tests and reference checks. These changes ensure a more objective and transparent selection process and decision-making. Furthermore, the abolition of the central selection committee for professional posts has resulted in significant reductions of the timeframes to fill vacant posts. As a reminder, the recruitment timeframe is expected to be reduced to a maximum of 120 days from the closing of the vacancy announcement to the finalization of the selection report. The appointment and selection process for staff members in the general service category, including the temporary assistance pool in Headquarters, will also be reviewed in 2015, with a view to introducing similar processes to increase the consistency of the recruitment decisions and to streamline the procedure, in particular by strengthening the initial short-listing process.

6. The Framework Agreement between FAO, IFAD and WFP for the collaboration on recruitment, selection and appointment of General Service Staff at Rome Headquarters was issued on 16 July 2014. It provides for the establishment of a Central Roster for the recruitment of temporary/short-term staff in the General Service category for the three RBAs and opens vacancies for regular positions in the General Service category in each of the Rome based agencies for application to all General Service staff of the Rome based agencies. The Recruitment Services of the three Rome-based agencies are currently working closely to review existing provisions, operational processes and system issues to ensure a successful implementation of the agreement and increased harmonization of

practices and rules in this area. This initiative will benefit staff members by additional possibilities for career development and mobility within the duty station, as well as the hiring units of the RBAs that will have access to a larger pool of qualified candidates.

7. All professional vacancies in the Regular Programme are now processed through iRecruitment and progress is well underway to fully integrate NPO recruitment into the iRecruitment platform. In accordance with the newly-established NPO recruitment guidelines and based on coordination with relevant SSC and CIO focal points, the workflow has been designed and follow-up actions are being taken to consolidate the system configuration. The same endeavour - to streamline and standardise recruitment procedures for professionals - is currently underway for the recruitment of FAO Representatives, Deputy FAO Representatives and staff on project funded positions.

8. Corporate Professional Employment Rosters are being put in place at FAO using the iRecruitment system, and containing pre-endorsed candidates to quickly meet the diverse needs in resources and skills of the Organization. FAO will also establish and maintain a specialized function oriented roster, or "Departmental Recruitment Rosters" enabling access to large pools of qualified candidates for targeted recruitment activities. These will also assist hiring units to identify potential candidates for assignments as Consultants or Subscribers to Personal Service Agreements. An emergency response roster has already been set up, in collaboration with TCE, and is running.

9. The FAO roster functionality was developed using the existing FAO corporate systems and technology. Acceptance testing of final revisions and user sign-off is now completed and a live Pilot and training and deployment to FAO offices are planned for the remainder of 2014.

Progress on geographic representation and gender balance

10. The need to increase the number of equitably-represented countries continues to be a priority issue. Outreach activities in the area of recruitment are being pursued to address the geographic representation such as the increased use of social media to advertise positions and access available databases of qualified professionals; analysis of user profiles of the FAO employment site; understanding better the national labour markets, potential competing employers in the country (e.g. NGOs), the tertiary educational institutions and areas of specialization in the country that the Organization should target. The number of non-represented countries as at end August 2014 was 44 while the number of under-represented countries was 21.

11. As at August 2014, women occupy 39 percent of Professional Regular Programme posts; the overall figure demonstrates an increase from 38 percent in May.

Junior Professional Programme

12. In 2011, the first cohort of 18 Junior Professionals (JPs) joined FAO on initial two year assignment terms, and six additional JPs joined the Organization in the last quarter of 2013. The third cohort of 19 JPs came on board between June and August 2014.

13. A fundamental factor to evaluate the success of the programme is the level of retention of JPs at the end of the initial two-year assignment. To date, from the 18 JPs hired under the first cohort, 12 have been retained and are funded by the host units (i.e. 8 JPs under a fixed term contract and 4 employed under non staff human resources contracts). In consultation with the Director-General, it has been decided that after the two first years of appointment as a JPO financed by OHR, the hosting offices will ensure, in collaboration with CSPP, fund availability for a minimum of two years to keep on board the former JP, subject to satisfactory performance.

Corporate Mobility Policy

14. Following the introduction of the Corporate Mobility Policy in December 2013, the number of mobility assignments implemented in the Organization from 1 January to 31 July 2014 totalled 47,

which included 31 geographic assignments. OHR/CSP is currently reviewing procedures on the basis of internal consultations with staff and management and lessons learned from the 2014 mobility exercise, with the aim of streamlining implementation of the policy, affording greater opportunities for rotation to interested staff members, and ensuring integrity of technical and other capacity of offices and departments. Any refinement of implementation procedures are expected to be undertaken from the beginning of 2015.

Workforce Planning

15. Further to the skills mix exercise which took place earlier on this year, a number of areas were identified which required attention ranging from adjusting staffing to new priorities to addressing specific skills and competencies acquisition. The results of the skills mix exercise continue to be used throughout the 2014-15 implementation cycle to guide activities in recruitment, mobility, learning and development. In the latter area, steps have been taken to provide or expand the learning programme in those areas which have been identified as critical: negotiation, management and facilitation.

16. The question of how best to address internal control considerations in workforce planning has been discussed with the Inspector-General. Pending the introduction of more robust and systematic workforce planning mechanisms, specific measures have not yet been implemented and OHR and OIG are expected to provide updates on progress in this area to the Finance Committee in 2015.

Learning Strategy

17. The implementation of the learning strategy is proceeding as per the established plan of activities for 2014. Of particular interest amongst the new initiatives to support continuous learning is the development of a programme to support FAORs which will be launched in September. The programme consists in performance support tools which can be accessed at anytime from anywhere and the setting up of a peer community. The first theme to be proposed to FAORs will be resource mobilization.

18. The expansion of the eLearning curriculum is ongoing, with an increasing number of titles available at learning@fao. There is also further development of FAO titles in the area of UN programming principles, career management and competency based interview techniques and the launch of eLearning language courses for staff that have no access to language training at their duty station.

Streamlining and Increased Efficiency

(i) HR Servicing - Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

19. Following on from the SOP project conducted at the end of 2013, standardized procedures are now in use in the Shared Services Centre offices across the three hubs (Budapest, Santiago and Bangkok). The procedures are also used as a key part in the induction training of new HR staff. It is now planned to extend the analysis and definition of SOPs to all HR areas in Headquarters, such as recruitment, post and performance management. This phase of the project started in September.

20. This exercise will be a pre-requisite to the definition of Service Level Agreements defining expected delivery times and quality levels for services provided by Human Resources in FAO. This will be an important step to increase the transparency and accountability of HR as a valued partner in the provision of key services which support the operations of the Organization. As part of the analysis of existing processes, opportunities will be sought to simplify and streamline existing procedures with a view to gaining further increases in efficiency.

(ii) Automation of HR processes (Payroll and Benefits and Social Security)

21. Please refer to section "Updates on Specific Human Resources Items requested by the Finance Committee" below.

(iii) ERP- HR data quality

22. A significant number of standard HR reports have been, and continue to be, developed and tested. As they are validated and signed off by the Office of Human Resources, they are made available to staff working in HR across regions and to managers and department heads to facilitate their analysis of the workforce and future needs (e.g. succession planning, gender/geographic distribution etc.). Deployment and user training activities will be carried out throughout the end of 2014.

23. On-going efforts are being made to formalize data assurance mechanisms. Through access to the appropriate reporting tools for operational users, improved self-monitoring will be possible, together with a reinforced centralized monitoring function; there should be a further increase in the overall quality and reliability of HR data.

(iv) Medical Insurance Coverage

24. OHR/CSPS continues to work closely with the Rome-based agencies to review the current schemes and related contracts for provision of medical and non-medical insurance services. The review of offers is on-going with the target of completing the multiple tender for these services by mid-September 2014. As previously underlined, this initiative could result in savings in insurance costs through economies of scale and streamlined provider management.

25. OHR/CSPS upon the request of the Finance Committee has been organizing an informal meeting of the Finance Committee to review the after-service medical coverage liabilities, in parallel with the UN Working group. FAO will review the medical plan design and cost-sharing arrangements along with other options of ASMC liabilities funding.

26. The Social Security Group participated in the review and design of processes to address the management of some additional 3,400 WFP locally recruited staff, and potentially 5,000 WFP consultants, previously managed by UNDP and transferred to the FAO/WFP Staff Pension Committee, Advisory Committee on Compensation Claims and Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage umbrella as of 1 July 2014. A letter of agreement is being signed with WFP on the provision of Social Security Services for these employees.

Updates on Specific Human Resources Items requested by the Finance Committee

(i) Vacancy rates

27. Since January 2014, when the recruitment freeze in Headquarters was lifted, up to end of August 2014, 54 Professional and Director level posts throughout the Organization have been advertised. Please refer to table 6 of the data pack that provides more updated information on the vacancy rates for PWB budgeted positions and the number of selection processes that are on-going.

28. Several factors explain that some restraint has been exercised in issuing vacancies and filling PWB posts since January 2014. Whilst the rate of vacancy announcements could be increased, these figures show that efforts are being made to address this matter. It should be recalled that at the start of the year departments were finalizing the PWB for 2014-2015 and the strategic planning exercise. Pending the finalization of these tasks, including the skill mix review undertaken in this context, vacancy announcements were issued with caution. Further, the first annual mobility exercise was scheduled for the second half of 2014 and therefore vacant posts identified as rotational and suitable for inclusion in the mobility review are not advertised before the completion of the mobility exercise.

(ii) Retention measures and Rates for JPs and APOs

29. With regard to the JPOs, and as noted above, 12 out of the 18 JPs from the first cohort of 2011 have been retained under different contractual arrangements. In consultation with the Director-General, it has been decided that after the two first years of appointment as a JPO financed by OHR, the hosting offices will ensure, in collaboration with CSPP, fund availability for a minimum of two years, subject to satisfactory performance.

30. Concerning the APOs, at the current moment, the retention policy for APOs relates to the cost-sharing arrangements. These agreements foresee that extensions of appointments beyond the maximum duration be funded by the donor on condition that FAO funds a further period of the same duration immediately after. It is to be noted that in these cases, FAO complies with the donor's policy and that only some donors apply this policy. Whilst a number of former APOs are retained and recruited as regular staff of the Organization, according to available information, the retention rate is much less than for the JPs. It should be noted, however, that we have encountered some difficulty in gathering data in this respect as the APO flag is not retained in the systems when a former APO is subsequently recruited under another type of contractual arrangement. We are currently reviewing our systems and records to address this issue. OHR is also looking into additional measures which in any case will have to be agreed with the donors with subsequent amendments to the existing agreements.

(iii) Automation of human resources processes by better use of available systems such as GRMS

31. Below (a to d) are listed on-going or recently concluded initiatives in the human resources area to automate processes. These changes not only simplify and streamline the work, but will also reduce the level of errors due to manual intervention, and therefore contribute to improving the quality of HR data, as well as of the reports, as the data is updated immediately upon processing in the system. Other initiatives are being considered such as the recording and processing of overtime in GRMS which is currently being done off-line.

a) Payments of non-staff employees

32. Since November 2012, all Non-Staff Human Resources (NSHR) are paid automatically through the payroll subject to an on-line certification, in lieu of the previous procedures requiring manual processing of payments for each individual. This change has generated significant improvements in terms of accuracy in payments as well as the correct recording of HR and financial data.

33. CSP is working with CIO to also incorporate the payment of living allowances for the non-staff employees into payroll, thereby significantly streamlining this process. It will also avoid errors due to the processing of the payments through the travel system that is not linked to the payroll or the certification by the managers of days worked by the employees each month. The change should be implemented by the start of 2015 once the provisions governing the living allowance have been reviewed with the end users and HR professionals.

b) Processing of Separation Payment Scheme

34. In compliance with the ICSC's recommendation following the results of the Salary Survey for General Service Staff based in Rome duty station, the Separation Payment Scheme (SPS) was revised and the new scheme implemented with effect from 1 March 2014. Previously, all calculations and payments of the SPS, i.e. final payments and advances during staff members service, were manually done and processed. When the revised scheme was introduced, GRMS was modified to accommodate the new scheme and, as a result, the calculation and payment of the SPS no longer requires manual intervention. The processing of SPS advances will also be done through payroll, and the recalculation and reconciliation of the SPS balances will be immediately available and up-to-date.

c) Interface GRMS - UNJSPF system

35. OHR has successfully completed a project to automatically provide GRMS pension related HR and financial data through an interface to the newly released UNJSPF IPSAS. This automatic linkage will enhance the quality and timeliness of information available to participants and accelerate the processing of pension benefits. FAO is the first Organization in the UN-system to implement this new interface.

d) Social Security Processes

36. OHR, in close collaboration with the Medical Unit and CIO, is finalizing the migration of the information system used to record medical and social security data of FAO, WFP and IFAD staff and retirees. This project will provide a series of automated tools including “self-service” facilities for participants to file electronically Service Incurred claims. This will reduce the number of manual transactions and accelerate settlement of claims. The system will go live in November 2014.

(v) Alignment of HR in the regions with corporate HR strategy

37. The HR Officers in the regional offices and SSC hubs formally report to the head of the decentralized offices, and on technical and substantive issues they have a direct reporting line to the Director of OHR.

38. There is a very close cooperation between the HR staff in the regions and HR Units in headquarters. In this regard, it should be noted that the HR staff in the regions are regularly consulted on new policies and procedures, initiatives, revisions of provisions of the Manual, etc. These consultations are extremely valuable for OHR/CSP to gather information on processes in offices outside Headquarters, be informed of common issues faced by the staff, and obtain their views on the feasibility of introducing and effectively implementing HR proposals emanating from headquarters.

39. On several recent projects, OHR/CSP promoted the active involvement of the regional offices and HR staff, in support of decentralization and knowledge transfer, such as the competency framework under which regional focus groups were established, in the context of the generic job profiles, as well as in the SOPs initiative.

40. Other mechanisms are in place to ensure a constructive and open dialogue with HR staff outside of headquarters, such as regular monthly meetings via video-conference between the HR Policy Branch in HQ and the HR staff from several decentralized offices based on time-zone.

41. In the area of learning and development, there has been increased collaboration between HQ and the regions. This has translated into more meaningful collaboration for the design and delivery of learning opportunities at the local level and for increased autonomy by the regions to keep track of their activities and benefit from learning@fao functionalities.

42. On workforce planning, our new mobility policy sets a base for a very close cooperation between HQ and regions. Regions will be very closely involved in all staffing decisions at an early time and are closely involved in developing and setting up a mobility plan in line with their yearly HR planning exercise, the HR Officers will be expected to support managers in the region in this regard, in close collaboration with the Recruitment Branch and Mobility Administrator in Rome.