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Progress Report on Rome-based Agencies collaboration

Executive summary

This document provides an update on status of progress on Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) collaboration. The report covers concrete achievements arising from RBA collaboration in the context of the five long-term priorities agreed in 2020, which aim to further strengthen RBA collaboration within: (i) the UN development system (UNDS) reform; (ii) the UN Food Systems Summit (FSS); (iii) the four areas of collaboration in the context of COVID-19; (iv) joint funding to drive collaboration; (v) leveraging knowledge and operationalizing collaboration.

The RBAs continue to strengthen their collaborative efforts, particularly within the context of the UNDS reform implementation and the UN FSS follow-up. Moreover, the future direction of RBA collaboration builds upon informed decisions provided by the Joint Evaluation of RBA collaboration conducted in 2021, which sets out the path forward towards enhanced collaboration and increased effectiveness.

Suggested action by the Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees and by the Council

The Joint Meeting and the Council are invited to take note of the Progress report on Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) collaboration and provide guidance, as deemed appropriate.

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I. Introduction

A. Overview and Purpose

1. In line with the RBAs' commitment to update the FAO Council and IFAD and WFP Executive Boards on their annual collaborative activities, the three agencies present this year's Progress Report. The current report aims to inform Members on the collaborative activities carried out in the reporting period spanning from July 2020 to June 2021, with a succinct update that builds upon the 2020 Progress Report. Specifically, the report covers the concrete achievements arising from RBA collaboration in the reporting period as associated to the five long-term priorities agreed in 2020, which set out to further strengthen RBA collaboration within: (i) the UN Development System (UNDS) reform; (ii) the UN Food Systems Summit; (iii) the four areas of collaboration in the context of COVID-19; (iv) joint funding to drive collaboration; (v) leveraging knowledge and operationalizing collaboration. This report also seeks to build upon the results of the independent Joint Evaluation of RBA collaboration, released in 2021.

2. Chapter I provides an introduction to collaborative activities over the past year, while Chapter II offers further analysis of these activities with a selection of in-depth examples at global, regional and country levels. Finally, Chapter III sets out a way forward, which builds upon the Joint Evaluation, acknowledging its recommendations therein, as well as the ongoing work associated with the follow-up to the UN FSS, and with the aim to further strengthen RBA collaboration with increasingly focused and impactful collaborative activities, particularly at country and regional levels and within the context of the implementation of the UNDS reform.

B. Introduction

3. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the global community was not on track to end world hunger and malnutrition by 2030. Now, the pandemic has made this goal significantly more challenging. According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI), the number of people affected by hunger continued to increase in 2020 under the shadow of the pandemic. Specifically, the economic downturns associated with COVID-19 containment measures have contributed to one of the largest increases in world hunger in decades, with as many as 161 million more people suffering from hunger in 2020. Furthermore, the pandemic has exposed food system vulnerabilities formed in recent years as a result of major drivers, such as conflict, climate variability, and economic strain. In many countries, these major drivers are occurring simultaneously at an increasing rate, with interactions that seriously undermine food security and nutrition while contributing to deepening acute food insecurity worldwide.

4. Despite these challenges, the RBAs have continued to collaborate to counter the adverse effects of the pandemic and secure the deliverance of their mandates, along with joint endeavours. From the reallocation of funds, joint food security assessments, to strategic planning, each Agency has committed time and resources to ensure that the most vulnerable continue to receive the necessary attention and support.

C. Highlights

5. As global leaders, the RBAs continued raising awareness to support ending hunger and malnutrition in fora including global meetings, high-level partnerships, knowledge-sharing events, and briefings and consultations with Members. In 2021, the RBA Senior Consultative Group (SCG)

met three times and discussed various matters including: the UN FSS, the Regional Sahel – SD3C Programme, the pilot RBA country programmes and plans, the RBA Evaluation, and administrative matters. As such, the RBA SCG continues to be a key mechanism for information exchange, coordination and cooperation among the Senior Management of the three Agencies.

6. FAO and WFP prepared their Strategic Frameworks and Plans, while IFAD completed its 12th Replenishment. Throughout the process, the RBAs consulted one another and collaboration features prominently in each. For the first time, FAO and WFP also conducted an online consultation, which provided input to the development and operationalization of their Strategic Frameworks and Plans, respectively.

7. One of the main achievements of the RBAs globally was the successful execution of the UN FSS, its Pre-Summit, and various related processes. With the responsibility of the follow-up largely in the hands of the RBAs, the three Agencies are in the process of discussing and designing how they can take forward, implement and monitor the outcomes of the Summit together.

8. The RBAs actively supported the 2021 G20 Italian Presidency by participating and providing technical inputs to several working groups including the Development and Agriculture Working Groups. This culminated in the [Matera Declaration](#) on food security, nutrition and sustainable food systems, which was adopted jointly by Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Ministers for Development of the G20. In the Declaration, the signatories "agree to deliver on food security priorities by enhancing efforts in ensuring safe and adequate nutrition for all, ending all forms of malnutrition, preserving agrobiodiversity, as well as relying on science, innovation, advanced business practices and responsible behaviour complementing traditional knowledge, local food culture and best practices in order to achieve SDG 2 targets".

9. The following section, which is comprised of several in-depth examples, provides a more comprehensive analysis of the ways in which the RBAs collaborate at global, regional and country levels to achieve their longer-term objectives and maximize the impact of their food systems, food security and nutrition efforts. While the report does not contain an exhaustive list of all collaborative activities covering the 2020-2021 period, it highlights key areas and priorities, including where each Agency respects each-others comparative advantage, and collaborates when there is added value.

II. 2020-2021 RBA Collaboration Across Global, Regional and Country Levels

10. **Chapter II** provides a substantive overview of this year's collaboration activities at the global and corporate levels, and a status of country and regional level work. To visualize the work of the RBAs and demonstrate the nature of collaboration, several in depth examples are presented.

D. Overview of Collaboration Activities at Global Level

11. The RBAs have a long-standing history of advancing the fight against hunger and malnutrition by collaborating at global level as key actors in high level political and thematic fora, thematic experts, leaders of humanitarian hunger-related efforts, and global conveners of stakeholders. This global collaboration includes critical work along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus as well as across agri-food systems transformation, all of which results in extensive impact at country level and includes joint work which has seen significant progress during the 2020-2021 reporting period. Firstly, the RBAs collaborated intensely towards both the pre, and actual UNFSS, with the goal of leveraging the power of food systems world-wide in order to advance recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The RBAs also furthered their work together in thematic areas, such as nutrition, gender and resilience through the sustained exchange of technical knowledge, lessons learned and good practices. In addition, RBA collaboration continued for the advancement of those global initiatives with a direct humanitarian reach to the field level. The RBAs' combined efforts on the Food Security Cluster (FSC) provide an example of such collaboration, along with the RBAs'

participation in the publication of this year's SOFI Report and the Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC). Finally, the RBAs continued to serve as multi-stakeholder conveners for the promotion of knowledge sharing, policy development, and advocacy, through their lead roles in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and UN Decade of Family Farming (UNDIFF).

12. RBA Collaboration in the Context of the UN Food Systems Summit

Background: The momentum leading up to the Summit, along with the Summit itself, has served to elevate the discourse and political relevance of food systems, both globally and nationally. Over the past 18 months the RBAs have worked together at all levels, to engage in the various Summit related processes necessary to reach this objective. For example, as Anchor UN Agencies, the RBAs supported the Action Tracks 1, 4 and 5, while contributing technical expertise to the relevant products and solutions across all action tracks. Moreover, RBA staff was embedded across all five Action Tracks to ensure alignment of their work, and to build on synergies and strengths. The RBAs also contributed significant human and financial resources, including by hosting the Pre-Summit and the Summit Trust Fund.

Results: The RBAs made significant contributions to the work of the Scientific Group by providing data and analyses, as well as substantial inputs to evidence-based reports. In addition, the RBAs co-led and developed multi-stakeholder initiatives and coalitions which focused on a range of themes, including: zero hunger, healthy diets, universal school meals, food is never waste, agroecology, sustainable productivity growth, blue and aquatic foods, decent work and living income, and Agriculture Innovation Mission (AIM) for Climate. Similarly, the RBAs also contributed to boosting nature-based solutions, building resilience, and highlighting the important role of finance, innovation, and other means of implementation. In addition, the RBAs supported national governments to convene Country Level Dialogues, which led to the development of national pathways for food systems transformation.

The RBAs and our UN sister Agencies, together with the Deputy Secretary-General, Special Envoy and Summit Secretariat are in the process of finalizing the approach to the Summit Follow-up that will draw largely upon feedback from Members, advice from the Secretary-General and the efforts of the UN system, International Organizations, non-state actors and all constituencies. Moving forward, there is an agreement that FAO will host the Food Systems Coordination Hub staffed by RBAs, UNDP, UNEP, WHO secondments that will ensure a smooth transition of the UN FSS without creating any new structure. Moreover, the RBAs also agree that the Summit Follow-up provides an opportunity to strategically enhance collaboration, particularly at country level and in supporting governments to implement national pathways, develop national platforms, enhance policy and strategic planning processes, and technical initiatives. The ultimate goal of leveraging the power of agri-food systems transformation is to drive our recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and get us back on track to achieving all 17 SDGs.

13. Maximizing Efficiencies and Complementarities in Nutrition

Background: Officially launched on 1 January 2021, UN Nutrition is a UN inter-agency coordination and collaboration mechanism for nutrition at global and country levels. This Body represents a merger of the United Nations Network for the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement (established in 2013 by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and the WHO) and the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 1977). The RBAs played important leadership role in the previous Bodies, as well as further served as significant contributors to the merger following shared ambitions to reduce duplications and maximize efficiency, as set out by the UN reform. By collaborating to harness the complementary nature of the entities, the RBAs have thus integrated and streamlined their efforts to respond to the changing nutrition landscape and end malnutrition in all its forms.

Results: After spearheading efforts on the merger, the RBAs continue to play a central role in UN Nutrition. The Steering Committee is fully established with FAO, WFP and IFAD being core members along with UNICEF and WHO. FAO is hosting the new Body and along with WFP and UNICEF provides key staff to the Secretariat. FAO, IFAD and WHO support UN Nutrition financially. UNEP and IAEA as rotational members of the Steering Committee also provide funding.

In late 2019, FAO and WFP undertook a stocktaking exercise of existing and planned global school food guidance products. This highlighted the urgent need for a more coordinated and coherent UN wide approach to advance the school nutrition agenda. A Community of Practice (CoP) on School Nutrition was set up which the RBAs advocated for UN Nutrition to facilitate and host. The CoP gathers representatives of a multitude of UN Agencies and other relevant international organizations to align their efforts, exchange knowledge, reduce duplication, improve visibility and maximize investments related to school nutrition guidance. This has led to enhanced partnerships among Agencies potentially playing a key role in the School Meals Coalition launched at the UN Food Systems Summit. The CoP is an example of how RBA collaboration has brought together the UN system to accelerate progress for nutrition objectives and targets at all levels.

14. RBAs' Joint Action to Address Hunger in Humanitarian Crises

Background: With acute food insecurity rising steadily across the world in recent years, the RBAs have stepped up their partnership to avert famine and pull millions back from the brink through the Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on Preventing Famine, in which FAO and WFP are core members. The RBAs collaborate intensively at global level to address hunger in humanitarian crises through joint advocacy and by producing high-level analyses, such as SOFI, GRFC and the Hunger Hotspots report. These knowledge management products provide up-to-date, reliable information on highly complex and evolving contexts, strengthening humanitarian food security response at all levels. In conjunction with this role as global thought leaders, the RBAs work together to operationalize food security action on the ground through an extensive and effective network of partnerships. The Global Food Security Cluster (gFSC) is one of the main mechanisms through which FAO and WFP convene partners at global, regional and country levels to ensure that the food security needs of communities affected by humanitarian crises are met in a timely and coherent manner. To date, the gFSC supports 64 global partner organizations in 33 of the most vulnerable countries by coordinating over 2,000 institutions and stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, CSOs, and UN organizations. To ensure more strategic and context driven responses, the gFSC relies on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) and the Cadre Harmonisé (CH) analyses, which are critical for classifying the scale and severity of food insecurity and malnutrition.

Results: During the reporting period, the gFSC coordinated more than USD 2 billion worth of emergency food security response in humanitarian contexts worldwide. The Cluster has developed a Global Funding Dashboard to track the amount each country receives and needs against the food security components of the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs), including the COVID-19 GHRP. HRPs are largely informed by the IPC – a universally accepted common standard for food insecurity classification in almost two-thirds of the most severe food crisis countries. In collaboration with national authorities and local partners, the gFSC continued to establish and strengthen coordination mechanisms at the subnational level, avoiding duplications and creating bottom-up collaboration between country and global levels. The Cluster also contributes to the Global Network Against Food Crises, helping to inform resilience and longer-term development programmes by better understanding the drivers of food insecurity and mapping response actors.

Global joint efforts of this kind also create a strong foundation for country level collaboration. For example, in November 2020, a multi-agency initiative funded by the European Union and Norway implemented a UN Joint Programme to “Build and Strengthen Urban and Rural Resilience and the Conditions for Recovery in Syria”. This initiative brings together FAO, UNDP, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNICEF, and WFP ‘delivering as one’ with multi-sectoral interventions to build resilience on a cross-programmatic range of nutrition, school feeding and vulnerability analysis.

15. RBA Collaboration as the Backbone of CFS

Background: FAO, IFAD and WFP continued their collaboration within the CFS, routinely contributing to its strategic direction through regular engagement in the Bureau and Advisory Group meetings and thematic workstreams. The RBAs support the CFS first of all by hosting and sponsoring the CFS Secretariat. Furthermore, RBA staff and expertise lend technical support to the CFS in thematic areas, including on gender, youth and other social inclusion agenda of relevance to Food Security and Nutrition and related goals of the 2030 Agenda. This is provided through engagement in informal consultations, and through coordination of joint events. Thus, it is by these modalities that the RBAs ensure a smooth business continuity of the Secretariat and a high-level of engagement, even during the global pandemic.

Results: During the reporting period, the RBAs continued to promote and mainstream the CFS policy products as instruments for accelerating progress on the implementation of the SDGs. The RBAs have worked extensively with the CFS to develop the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (VGFSyN); monitoring the use and application of CFS policy recommendations; and providing guidance on Agro-ecological and Other Innovative Approaches. The Agencies have highlighted the importance of these Voluntary Guidelines to ensure policy coherence across different domains, aiming to help governments and other stakeholders reshape food systems to sustainably deliver improved nutrition for all. Through its 105 recommendations, the VGFSyN outline the whole breadth of actions needed across multiple sectors to address the underlying causes of hunger and malnutrition, while reducing the environmental and climate impact of food systems.

Going forward, with strong RBA support, the CFS will continue to be an important space where global multi-stakeholder actors strive together to implement the FSN dimensions of the SDGs.

16. RBA Joint Leadership in the Decade of Family Farming

Background: Family farming is the predominant form of global agricultural production and a key factor of sustainable development. Family farmers have the potential to significantly contribute to sustainable agri-food systems; yet, most of them face significant poverty and malnutrition.

To enable family farmers to fully achieve the SDGs as a key driver, the General Assembly proclaimed the United Nations Decade of Family Farming in 2019 (UNDF). The UNDF serves as a framework for countries to address the importance and challenges of family farming through the development and implementation of targeted public policies and investments. As declared in the UNDF resolution, FAO and IFAD were granted joint leadership for the implementation of the Decade.

Results: Following the establishment of a Joint Secretariat and under the guidance of the International Steering Committee for the UNDF, FAO and IFAD facilitated a consultation for the development of the Global Action Plan (GAP): a detailed guidance for the achievement of the UNDF produced with inputs received from all relevant actors around the world. With the guidance of the International Steering Committee, which also includes WFP, the Joint Secretariat supports the implementation of the UNDF at global level, by managing communication, awareness raising and dissemination activities, while also developing global products to provide technical support at the regional/national level. At the national level, the Secretariat supports multi-actor fora and platforms for the design and implementation of action frameworks to support family farming (National Action Plans – NAPs). The goal is to establish 100 NAPs by 2024: to date, nine NAPs have been approved and are being implemented, the drafting phase was reached in four and considerable progress was made in mobilizing actors to draft such plans in 35 countries. Furthermore, over 1,580 relevant actors have been involved in platforms of dialogue processes, including 966 family farmers’ organizations and federations. 65 intersectoral coordination mechanisms have been established and 85 laws, policies and regulations focused on supporting family farming have been developed and approved.

For example, the elaboration of the Philippine Action Plan for Family Farming (PAP4FF) was developed with the continued support of FAO and IFAD. This was achieved through: (i) facilitation role with government and representatives from FOs, CSOs and other stakeholders; (ii) leveraging knowledge; (iii) technical assistance; and (iv) financial support.

Lastly, it is important to note that although the spread of COVID-19 and related measures to contain transmission brought unexpected challenges to family farmers, the GAP proved to be a valid framework also for tackling the immediate impacts and helping revamp rural economies and societies in the medium term.

E. Collaboration at Regional and Country Level

17. The RBAs continue to advance both regional and country level collaboration, which is fully aligned with, and complementary to the ongoing UNDS reform implementation. The Agencies recognize the UNDS reform as an opportunity to come together on the ground to identify collective priorities and actions, further promoting the Secretary-General’s vision of Delivering as One UN.

18. As the pandemic continued to further disrupt livelihoods, the RBAs contributed to the UN Framework for the Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19, by conducting context-specific impact assessments on food security and nutrition. As part of the UN Efficiency Agenda, the RBAs have also continued to contribute to country Business Operation Strategies (BOS), which represent a significant opportunity to identify and utilize common services with the ultimate goal of reaching efficiencies and cost avoidance. In addition, the RBAs continue to implement and develop UN joint programmes and in particular, the Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change (SD3C), which has come to serve as a flagship example of the RBAs coming together to identify common objectives and activities at regional levels. Lastly, the RBAs furthered their joint efforts at country level that feed into the UN Common Country Analysis (CCA) and development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

(UNSDCF). By working together directly from the outset, the RBAs were able to identify and advocate for joint priorities within the context of the UNCTs. Thus, regional and country level collaboration continued to take place in the context of the UNDS reform, as further detailed with the following in-depth examples.

19. Collaborating to Maximize COVID-19 Response Efforts

Background: Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the RBAs have played a central role in assessing and responding to the impacts of this unprecedented crisis on livelihoods, food trade, markets, food supply chains and livestock around the world. This has been a coordinated effort, carried out at all levels and across four pillars of intervention, i.e. (i) country programming and planning; (ii) policy and analytical support; (iii) advocacy and information sharing; and (iv) business continuity. Within a multitude of countries, the RBAs have conducted context specific assessments of the impact of COVID-19 on national food security and nutrition. Each assessment has served to provide data regarding the impact of the pandemic on national agricultural, food and nutrition systems in order to strengthen effective decision-making on behalf of response agents including governments, local NGOs, the RBAs themselves and other UN Agencies.

Results: The RBAs have assessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food security and nutrition in countries spanning all regions of the globe, providing national response agents with the actionable data necessary to develop effective mitigation measures. For example, the impact assessment conducted in Egypt was used to launch a publicity campaign with the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation on agri-food production and food handling safety measures. Similarly, Bolivia's impact assessment enabled it to be one of the first countries in the world to have a diagnosis and recovery plan in place. The results of these assessments have served to strengthen local and national decision-making aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic and facilitating the production, movement, and distribution of goods essential to food security and nutrition.

The RBAs have also developed programmes together stemming from the acute analysis in the impact assessments, including:

On the School Feeding agenda, the RBAs jointly supported a School Feeding Programme in Guatemala. The Programme aims to contribute to improved nutrition of schoolchildren and throughout COVID-19 it continued to provide healthy meals. Instead of making the meals at school, farmers and parents associations made packages for parents to take home and cook. Despite markets shutting down, farmers were still able to supply the food because it was local.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Sierra Leone, FAO, IFAD and WFP supported preparations for an emergency Food Security Monitoring System (E-FSMS) assessment to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on food security. The data collected was useful to the key food security stakeholders to guide their interventions in addressing food insecurity. This data supported geographical targeting of the COVID-19 response to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable were prioritized. To ensure that the E-FSMS data collection did not contribute toward the spread of the virus, interviews targeting urban households were undertaken through mobile-phone-based interviews, while those engaging with rural inhabitants used face-to-face interviews with heightened IPC.

Challenges, Enablers and Lessons Learned: By capitalizing on comparative advantages and technical expertise, RBA collaboration has greatly enabled the capacity of the three Agencies to conduct comprehensive impact assessments for the advancement of their shared food security objectives within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the long-lasting impact that COVID-19 will have on global food security, the RBAs will build on this experience and the synergies created to scale-up their collaborative efforts in this area.

20. Country Level Collaboration on Business Operations Strategy (BOS)

Background: As part of its ongoing effort to strengthen the coherence and cost effectiveness of UN assistance worldwide, the UNDS reform includes initiatives to achieve efficiency gains that can be redeployed into development activities. The RBAs have committed to embrace the UN Efficiency Agenda by endorsing the three enablers, and the signing of the Mutual Recognition Statement by all entities is a proof of this commitment. The RBAs believe it is beneficial to focus administrative collaboration and closely align regional and country corporate activities with ongoing efforts led within the broader context of the UN Efficiency Agenda.

One of the primary initiatives is the Business Operations Strategy (BOS): a framework focused on promoting and facilitating shared common services within UN Country Teams (UNCTs). Specifically, BOS provides a structure and guide through which UNCTs can conduct the planning, management, monitoring and reporting of shared business operations. As part of the BOS development process, UN Agencies identify common services, and agree on one or more ‘managing’ Agencies, while those interested in using the services join as ‘participants’. The BOS is a results-based framework which is structured around six common service lines: Finance, Human Resources and Administration, Information and Communication Technology Services, Logistics, Procurement.

Results: The RBAs are actively participating in the BOS at country level across all six areas and are expected to reap efficiencies and efficiency gains primarily in the form of cost avoidance and quality improvement through leveraging economies of scale. Data collected by the UN Development Cooperation Office (DCO) show that RBAs are responsible for managing a multitude of service lines. For example, FAO now manages the Insurance Services for the UNCT in Burundi, while WFP manages the Staff Training Services in Egypt. WFP managed to position the UN Booking Hub within the BOS framework as a high-yield common service for carpooling pilots to support BOS implementation. IFAD signed an Agreement for field access to WFP’s UN Booking Hub to digitally transform passenger mobility delivery at country level and to operationalize inter-agency carpooling by offering and receiving passenger transportation worldwide, with three countries already operational. In addition, the RBAs participate in services managed by other Agencies. FAO manages 45 common service lines and WFP 253. Overall, based on BOS 2.0 projections (as at end of September 2021), it is projected that RBAs’ efforts at country offices level will result in an estimated cost avoidance across 3,091 common service lines over the course of the next five years.

Challenges, enablers and lessons learned: It is important to note that the RBAs are engaging in BOS as individual Agencies; collaboration in common services at country level is therefore taking place under wider UN reform processes. As such, the UNDS reform provides an opportunity for enhanced efficiency gains, which allows the three Agencies to concentrate their collaborative efforts at country level on joint programming, policy and advocacy.

21. Update on SD3C Programme, an example of IFAD financing enabling RBA regional collaboration

Background: The Joint Programme for the Sahel in Response to the Challenges of COVID-19, Conflict and Climate Change (SD3C) was approved by the IFAD Executive Board in December 2020. The programme design was supported by a large team of technical experts from the FAO Investment Centre that facilitated the negotiations and the initial steps of implementation in close collaboration with all Agencies and governments. On 13 February 2021, five financing Agreements (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Senegal) and one Letter of Intent (Mauritania) were signed in

N'Djamena, Chad at the G5 Sahel Council of Ministers meeting. The approval of the Programme and signing of the Agreements was the culmination of a year-long consultation process involving all three RBAs. The SD3C was first conceptualized in March 2020, following an official request for support from the G5 Sahel countries and Senegal to respond to the challenges of COVID-19, conflict and climate change. The project will be implemented over six years with USD 109 million in financing from IFAD, and USD 71 million from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other co-financers, for a total of USD 180 million. This flagship RBAs joint endeavor brings together their respective experience and comparative advantage to support the project. In implementing this initiative, IFAD will provide funding, technical and coordination support, while FAO and WFP will also provide technical expertise and implementation support. Additionally, joint funding is envisaged from GCF and other co-financers. The FAO Investment Centre as a long-standing partner of IFAD will continue to provide design and supervision support to this and many other investment projects.¹

Results: The SD3C will support 854,000 vulnerable people (50 percent women, 40 percent youth) from 123,000 rural households in the six countries. The project has four overarching objectives: (i) *strengthen and expand the productivity of smallholder farmers in cross-border areas;* (ii) *improve cross-border supply chains for agricultural inputs and products;* (iii) *reduce conflict and promote safe economic transactions;* (iv) *apply food systems approaches to promote economic social and environmental sustainability.* The SD3C is the first regional IFAD financed project designed and implemented by the three RBAs involving a substantial amount of coordination. It has provided the RBAs with an opportunity to work together in project conceptualization directly from the outset, rather than simply retrofitting collaboration into existing programmes. This has provided the RBAs with an opportunity to develop better inter-agency relationships, with a clearer understanding of one another's priorities and further strategic thinking on how to build complementarities among the RBAs in the already existing programmes of all three Agencies in the Sahel. As of today, field activities have started. This quick start was made possible by an innovative set-up: the SD3C is hosted by IFAD-funded programmes already under implementation in the six countries. Nearly USD 5 million has been disbursed for the 2021 activities.

Challenges, enablers and lessons learned: One of the challenges for the three Agencies in the coming months will be to mobilize additional funds for this programme. Donors, such as Denmark, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, have already shown strong interest in joining the initiative. Another challenge will be the implementation of the programme with strong joint planning and coordination.

22. Furthering Joint Action in Kenya under the UN reform

Background: The Secretary-General introduced the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and the UN Common Country Analysis tool (CCA) as instruments for empowering UN agencies with a coherent strategic direction for integrated action at country level. The RBAs' joint work in Kenya is an example of actualizing these instruments. Since formalizing their collaboration with a Letter of Agreement (2016-2018), the RBAs have worked together to support smallholder farmers to increase their productivity and profitability with drought tolerant crops, an innovative agricultural input "e-voucher" scheme, conservation agriculture, value-addition technologies and market linkages. The strengthened coordination efforts are fully in line with the ongoing implementation of the UN reform and Kenya's country teams recognize the importance of conducting a joint RBA analysis to feed into the CCA and development of the UNSDCF.

¹ From 2015-2020, the FAO Investment Centre supported the design of 48 IFAD-financed investment projects for a total value of USD 4.3 billion.

Results: In an effort to further concretize collaboration, while also considering findings and recommendations from the corporate Joint Evaluation of RBA Collaboration, the RBA Kenya country teams developed a new Agreement for RBA collaboration in Kenya (2021-2023). The Agreement is scheduled to be signed in the fourth quarter of 2021 with the purpose of providing a framework to facilitate collaboration among the parties, further enhancing cooperation, coordination and synergies among the RBAs. The RBA Agreement builds on the previous results achieved with smallholder farmers by encouraging further collaboration in three specific areas: (i) Policy Level; (ii) Programme and Operations; and (iii) Cross-cutting themes. Within each of these areas, the RBA country teams have identified strategic deliverables, such as promoting sustainable food systems for healthier diets, supporting farmers to achieve adequate production and increased productivity, working closely with the Government of Kenya and partners to promote economic inclusion of refugees and strengthen social protection systems for greater inclusivity of the rural poor. The RBAs have also been very instrumental in supporting the Government to plan and execute the Food Systems Dialogues across the country and in coming up with a position paper.

Challenges, enablers and lessons learned: Further progress will be reported next year, as the RBA country teams in Kenya will produce a joint brief at the end of the financial year to showcase the main achievements and lessons learned for stronger collaboration.

III. The Path Forward

23. The five longer-term priorities, identified in last year's Progress Report and described in Chapter I, are framed and anchored in the context of the UNDS reform and therefore will continue to shape the strategic direction for RBA collaboration. In the post COVID-19 world, the RBAs have important tasks ahead of them, working together on the UN FSS follow-up, and continuing to collaborate in the context of the implementation of the UNDS reform.

24. While recognizing the crucial role of multi-stakeholder partnerships in addressing the root causes of hunger and malnutrition, the RBAs are building on their comparative advantages, complementary operational modalities, as well as on their technical expertise, to explore, advance and implement joint planning and programming activities, and jointly explore tapping into new funding and financing mechanisms, with a view to achieving greater effectiveness and stronger impact on the ground, in alignment with national priorities of Members.

25. The UN FSS provided significant opportunities for the RBAs to further leverage their support to national governments in the attainment of the 2030 Agenda, by articulating an improved food systems approach, which will lead to more sustainable food systems. In the context of post-Summit coordination, the RBAs will lead a UN system-wide follow up mechanism that will leverage the existing technical and operational strengths and draw on the totality of UN capacities, to collectively transform food systems.

26. As the pursuit of collective outcomes can be challenging in diverse country contexts where the Agencies operate, the RBAs aim to jointly mobilize resources including through UN led funding mechanisms and pooled funding opportunities, as well as improving coordination in joint policy dialogues, knowledge sharing and communication structures amongst the Agencies at all levels, as well as with Members.

27. The RBAs will continue to improve efficiency and increase synergy in their work, and to make progress in the five longer-term priorities agreed in 2020: (i) to continue to strengthen RBA collaboration within the UN reform; (ii) to collaborate in the design, development and support of a strong follow-up UN Food Systems Summit; (iii) to continue joint work in the four areas of collaboration in the context of COVID-19; (iv) to pursue opportunities for joint funding to drive collaboration; (v) to leverage knowledge and institutionalize collaboration in all agreed areas.