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Food and
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de las
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para la
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COUNCIL

Hundred and Forty-third Session

Rome, 28 November – 2 December 2011

Report of the 139th Session of the Finance Committee
Rome, 30 May – 1 June 2011

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REPORT OF THE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-NINTH SESSION OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE

Rome, 30 May – 1 June 2011

Introduction

1. The Committee submitted to the Council the following report of its Hundred and Thirty-ninth Session.
2. In addition to the Chairperson, Mr Yasser A.R. Sorour, the following representatives of Members were present:
 - Ms Kristina Gill (Australia)
 - H.E. Li Zhengdong (China)
 - Mr Louis Charicauth (Gabon)
 - H.E. Javad Shakhs Tavakolian (Islamic Republic of Iran)
 - Mr Claudio Miscia (Italy)
 - H.E. Jorge E. Chen Charpentier (Mexico)
 - Mr Ronald Elkhuisen (Netherlands)
 - Mr Gerardo E. Vega Berrio (Panama)
 - Mr Mohamed Eltayeb Elfaki Elnor (Sudan)
 - Mr Robert Sabiiti (Uganda)
 - Ms Elizabeth Petrovski (USA)
3. The Chairperson informed the Committee that:
 - Ms Kristina Gill had been designated to replace Ms Sara Cowan as the representative of Australia at this session;
 - Mr Claudio Miscia had been designated to replace Mr Augusto Zodda as the representative of Italy at this session;
 - Ms Claudia Cecile de Mauleón Medina had been designated to replace H.E. Jorge E. Chen Charpentier for part of this session as the representative of Mexico; and
 - Mr Gerardo E. Vega Berrio had been designated to replace H.E. Guido J. Martinelli della Togna as the representative of Panama at this session.
4. Summaries of the qualifications of Ms Gill, Mr Miscia, Ms de Mauleón Medina and Mr Vega Berrio are listed in the addendum to this report (CL 143/6 Add.1).

FAO Matters

EVALUATION OF FAO'S REGIONAL AND SUBREGIONAL OFFICES FOR THE NEAR EAST AND MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

5. The Committee reviewed the evaluation report and management response presented in document PC 106/5 – FC 138/22 (reissued).
6. The Committee appreciated the quality of the report, which identified a number of areas where corrective action was indicated. It noted that the recommendations of the evaluation addressed a broad range of issues and some of them were applicable to other Regions as well.
7. The Committee underlined the importance of ensuring that well-qualified technical staff was available to countries of the region, with skills matched to priorities, and focusing on key problems taking into account water scarcity, food insecurity and climate change in the Region. It stressed that the issue of disparity between the geographic coverage of the Near East Regional

Office and Near East Regional Conference should be resolved at the initiative of the concerned Member Countries.

8. The Committee:

- **recommended that resources required for enhancing the quality of FAO's presence in the Region should be realized primarily through efficiencies in the use of net appropriation resources, with the proposed regional Trust Fund primarily used for programme-related purposes;**
- **noted that the follow-up to many recommendations, including on the Trust Fund, would be addressed in a Management Plan for the Near East that would be submitted to the next Near East Regional Conference;**
- **endorsed the preparation of a paper on harmonization of the Regional Conference for the Near East and the Regional Office for the Near East be submitted to the next Regional Conference for the Near East; and**
- **requested the Secretariat to share the status of follow-up action on the implementation of the recommendations which fall under the purview of the Committee at a future session.**

World Food Programme Matters

AUDITED ANNUAL ACCOUNTS, 2010

9. The Committee discussed WFP's *Audited Annual Accounts 2010*, which included the Report of the External Auditor to the Financial Statements, supported by a brief presentation made by the WFP Secretariat which detailed the key elements within the Audited WFP Financial Statements. In particular, the Secretariat explained Financial Statement I, Financial Statement II and Financial Statement V.

10. The Committee was provided with an explanation by the Secretariat that the column "approved final budget" in Financial Statement V for 2010 (USD 6.7 billion) represented the base needs budget for the year, while the "actual utilization" in 2010 (USD 3.9 billion) represented the expenditures incurred and committed. The difference between these figures, therefore, represented the unfunded part of the Program of Work. The Committee was also informed that there was a seminar of three sessions called project planning and prioritization where the management and members of the board shared knowledge on how the project budgets were built, how resources were obtained and how they were allocated. This seminar was also useful to understand the difference between the budget and the actual utilization.

11. In response to a question from the Committee regarding the date of full implementation of the Enterprise Risk Management system, the Secretariat explained that the progress on implementation was progressing well and the fully integrated system would be deployed by the end of 2012.

12. The Committee acknowledged the operational differences between distributing food and distributing Cash and Vouchers and therefore the need to employ a different accounting practice for the timing of recognition of the expenses. The Committee also noted its support for the recommendation of the External Auditor, accepted by the Management, to disclose the amount and value of food stock held by Co-operating Partners going forward and commencing with the 2011 Annual Accounts;

13. The Committee was informed that the assumptions used in the authorized 15 year funding plan of WFP's Employee Benefit Liabilities were still valid;

14. The Committee requested clarification on the reasons for the reduction in food distributed (4.6mMT in 2010; against 4.8mMT in 2009) at the same time as the number of beneficiaries

reached by WFP (109.2m in 2010; against 101.8m in 2009) was increasing. The Secretariat explained that this was due to the increase in non-commodity WFP activities.

15. The Secretariat informed the Committee that the ex-gratia payments and losses figure of USD 550,884 in the Draft Decision included only those ex-gratia payments and losses funded by the General Fund, while the ex-gratia payments and losses figures disclosed in Note 9 to the 2010 Financial Statements of USD14.1m included ex-gratia payments and losses funded by all sources.

16. Regarding the VAT receivable, the Committee was informed that the balance outstanding had been stable in 2010 compared to 2009. An amount of around USD 1.5 million was recovered from a major debtor over the course of last year. At the same time, however, the allowance for doubtful accounts was increased from USD 25.3 million by the end of 2009 to USD 45.4 million by the end of 2010 as a prudent measure from the Management but that the Institution would exercise all its rights to recover the whole amount outstanding.

17. The Committee:

- **Welcomed the Audited Annual Accounts 2010, which included the Report of the External Auditor to the Financial Statements, as well as the clear presentation of key figures in the Financial Statements by WFP and the clarifications made by the Secretariat to the Committee's requests;**
- **Noted the Secretariat's commitment to continuing efforts to recover outstanding VAT receivables;**
- **Noted that the Secretariat would review the definition of original and final budget data included in Financial Statement V;**
- **Recommended the Executive Board approve the Audited Annual Accounts 2010;**
- **Welcomed the presence of the External Auditor during this session of the Committee.**

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS

18. The Committee discussed the *Report on the Implementation of the External Auditor's Recommendations* following a presentation by the WFP Secretariat highlighting the recommendations that had been implemented and those which remained outstanding at the end of 2010. Of the 12 recommendations outstanding, only 5 had been outstanding prior to 2010. The remaining 7 related to the recommendations on the Audit of the 2010 Annual Audited Accounts which would be addressed in due course.

19. The External Auditor clarified that comments were provided with regard to only those recommendations on which the Secretariat deemed as being completed.

20. The Committee:

- **Welcomed the *Report on the Implementation of the External Auditor's Recommendations*;**
- **Noted the progress made by WFP in implementing outstanding recommendations of the External Auditor; and**
- **Recommended that the future terminology used in the Progress Report be made more consistent and homogeneous.**

REVIEW OF THE MANAGEMENT PLAN CYCLE

21. The Committee discussed the document presented by the Secretariat, which outlined the advantages and disadvantages of changing the Management Plan cycle from the current biennial plan to a three-year rolling plan with annual Programme Support and Administrative (PSA) appropriations. The Committee noted that should the Executive Board approve the document and the necessary changes to WFP General Rules and Financial Regulations, the next Management

Plan document, due to be presented in the Second Regular Session in November 2011, would be a three-year rolling plan for 2012-2014, with an annual budget.

22. The Committee requested clarification on the potential benefits and drawbacks of the change in Management Plan Cycle as well as how the system would work in practice. The Committee was informed by the Secretariat that with the proposed change, the Management Plan would become a rolling document that would allow the Executive Board to consider WFP's budget on an annual basis. There would be more discipline in budgeting, as the logical extensions of all projects would be discussed annually rather than every biennium. The Committee was informed by the Secretariat that the proposed rolling Management Plan could reduce the need to present regular updates to the annually approved document.

23. The Committee:

- **Endorsed the Review of the Management Plan Cycle for approval of the Executive Board.**

FIFTH UPDATE ON THE WFP MANAGEMENT PLAN (2010-11)

24. The Committee received a presentation on the *Fifth Update on the WFP Biennial Management Plan (2010-2011)*, which outlined an increase in WFP's Programme of Work 2010-2011 since the fourth update in the net amount of USD 189.6 million. Overall, the Programme of Work now totalled USD 12.0 billion for the biennium, of which USD 6.8 billion was related to 2010 and USD 5.2 billion to 2011. The information provided in this update was up to the end of March 2011. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the Management Plan update for its clarity, level of detail and the broad topics covered in the document.

25. The update provided information on the projected resource level, together with an update on the utilization of WFP's advance financing mechanism including the utilization of the forward purchase facility.

26. The Committee requested the Secretariat to provide a more complete overview of WFP's active trust funds. The Secretariat agreed to make this information available in the upcoming Management Plan. The Committee was informed that the ISC rate on Trust Funds varied. Trust Funds that required a full range of support activities were charged ISC of 7%; others – such as those received and managed in a Country Office – were charged ISC of 4% and others – such as Trust Funds for activities similar to PSA – were exempt from ISC under General Rule XIII.4(d).

27. The Committee requested additional clarity on the function of the additional Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) position and the cost involved establishing an office to deal with food quality and nutrition at WFP. The Secretariat responded that WFP's consolidation in the area of food quality and nutrition would be cost neutral to the programme; this would include the upgrading a vacant D-2 position to the ASG level using non staff cost savings from PSA, to provide the required leadership.

28. The Committee asked about the expansion strategy of the Forward Purchase facility and how it intended to mitigate the risk. The Secretariat responded that the Forward Purchase Facility would no longer be request driven but driven by a more proactive review of needs on a periodic basis. The risk mitigation would remain unchanged. The Secretariat believed that this would lead to a greater efficiency and streamlining of the process.

29. The Committee asked the Secretariat what level of assistance was being provided to those affected by the North Africa and Middle East crisis, to which the Secretariat responded that WFP had increased its level of operations in North Africa, Syria and Yemen totalling approximately USD 130 million overall.

30. The Committee:

- **Welcomed the Update on the WFP Biennial Management Plan;**

- **Requested a complete overview of WFP's active Trust Funds;**
- **Requested more details on WFP's consolidation of food quality and nutrition; and**
- **Expressed the need for additional clarification on the proposed upgrading of a vacant D-2 position to the ASG level for consideration by the Board.**

COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS ON WINGS II

31. The Committee received a presentation by the Secretariat which highlighted that an assessment had been conducted during February and April 2011 and looked at the following:

- A comparative analysis of the benefits of the WFP Information Network and Global System II (WINGS II) and those of other similar systems implemented by other UN agencies;
- The extent to which WINGS II complemented the corporate Management Results Framework of WFP in terms of enhancing efficiency (process optimization); and
- An assessment of the extent of achieving the expected benefits presented in Annex II of the Executive Board document on Final Update on the WINGS II Project.

32. The Committee noted the Secretariat's explanation that in accordance with an industry standard approach, the technical assessment was undertaken with the support of SAP specialist using a methodology recommended by The Gartner Group, and that the report of that study provided the foundation for the preparation of the assessment as submitted to the Executive Board. The Secretariat also highlighted that the study identified conservative potential annual savings of USD 11.55 million from the WINGS II implementation leading to a pay-back of the WINGS II investment in 5 years. These were mainly productivity and effectiveness benefits (cost savings and cost avoidance).

33. It was further explained that the assessment revealed that other benefits beyond the purely quantitative ones which relate to the USD 11.55 million had accrued to WFP. Notably, a markedly improved control environment for the organization in terms of more standardized business processes across the entire organization and also a much more effective management of WFP's carbon footprint as a result of the WINGS II implementation.

34. WFP was also being called upon, as a result of its WINGS II implementation, to assist other UN organizations in similar endeavours. In some cases these UN agencies were proposing to adopt aspects of WFP's WINGS II solution rather than to build their own solutions at great expense and time. Recent examples included the UN secretariat, UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and other SAP Special Interest Group (SAPSIG) member organizations.

35. The Committee congratulated the Secretariat on its success and noted its appreciation of it sharing its experiences and solutions with other UN agencies. The Committee further noted that it would have, however, appreciated more detail in the WINGS II assessment report; in particular more supporting information on the reported USD 11.55 million per annum savings and the challenges and any negative outcomes that the Secretariat encountered as a result of the WINGS II implementation. The Committee looked forward to the Logistics Execution System (LES) pilot implementation and asked for information on the project's timelines.

36. The Secretariat noted that it would avail the full report of the assessment; albeit it a more technical report, to any members of the committee who would be interested.

37. The Committee:

- **Welcomed and noted the report on the WINGS II Value Assessment.**

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WFP AUDIT COMMITTEE

38. The Chairperson of WFP's Audit Committee (AC) presented the AC annual report for the preceding year. The report had been kept as brief as possible and, in keeping with the AC's advice

to WFP, efforts had been made to avoid the use of technical jargon. This seventh annual report covered the period from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011, during which the AC had met four times.

39. The Chairperson and another AC member would be leaving later that year. For the first time, an induction session had been organized for incoming members to learn something about WFP and the challenges it faced.

40. The Committee expressed concern about overlapping mandates and efforts among WFP's various oversight bodies. It also emphasized the need to recognize the features of WFP's operations that differed from those of most private sector organizations.

41. It was noted that the existence of a Executive Board working group undertaking an evaluation of the AC and a review of its terms of reference (TORs) provided an excellent opportunity for focusing the AC's work more closely on financial issues, and to make the most of the limited time and resources available. The new TORs should also include how the AC was to coordinate with other audit bodies.

42. The Committee:

- **Welcomed the presence of the Audit Committee Chairperson as well as the report; and**
- **Noted that a WFP Executive Board working group was refining the Audit Committee's mandate and terms of reference; and would also be examining the question of Audit Committee field visits to WFP operations.**

OVERSIGHT FRAMEWORK AND REPORTS DISCLOSURE POLICY

43. The Committee noted that the document was prepared on the basis of the request of the Executive Board at its Second Regular Session in November 2010. The Oversight Framework was presented to the Executive Board for information, and the Reports Disclosure Policy was presented to the Executive Board for approval.

44. The Committee discussed various practical aspects of the Reports Disclosure Policy including managing coordination among various bodies depicted on Figure 1 in document FC 139/9, where the three levels – governance, external oversight, and internal oversight – could be seen as hierarchical, and avoid duplication or overlap. The Committee noted that procedures governing the redaction of audit reports, as stated in paragraph 3 of Annex I of the document, would be developed after gaining some experience, with the intention of bringing greatest transparency, and to ensure that due process is safeguarded.

45. The Committee noted that while the decision of the Executive Board at the Second Regular Session in November 2010 referred to 'all internal reports' the Secretariat had proposed a policy for the disclosure of investigation reports only. Therefore the Executive Board should review the list of reports included in the document to come to a conclusion as to whether those reports met the requirements of the Executive Board for its governance role.

46. The Committee:

- **Noted the *Oversight Framework and Reports Disclosure Policy*; and**
- **Advised the Executive Board to review the list of reports included in the document and conclude as to whether those reports and the Reports Disclosure Policy met the requirements of the Executive Board for its governance role.**

REPORT OF THE INSPECTOR-GENERAL

47. In accordance with the WFP General Regulations, the annual *Report of the Inspector General* was presented to the Executive Board for its consideration. The Inspector General introduced the 2010 report to the Finance Committee. The Committee welcomed the report and there was a general discussion, including the following key issues.

48. The Committee enquired about the adequacy of budget and staffing of the Oversight Office. The Inspector General informed the Committee that the Oversight Office could be fully assessed only when the Office was equipped to make a positive assurance opinion, which in turn would be possible when (a) the internal control framework was fully implemented (b) Enterprise Risk Management was fully implemented and (c) risk based audit planning had matured.

49. The Committee was informed that staff externally recruited to the Oversight office were always fully technically qualified, and staff internally reassigned to the Oversight Office without the applicable qualification was required to obtain such during the first year of assignment. The Oversight Office recruited four staff with expertise in information technology (IT) auditing.

50. The Committee noted the Inspector General's explanation that backlog of investigation work had minimum impact on the annual assurance opinion because of the triaging process for priority handling of high-risk complaints.

51. The Committee discussed weaknesses noted in the areas of Emergency Response, Financial management and Information Technology, and was assured that management action on audit recommendations was satisfactory.

52. The Committee noted that the Office of Internal Audit had undertaken an internal quality assessment and the results were used as input for the external quality assessment to be undertaken by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) in July. The results of the external quality assessment would be submitted to the Executive Board for information.

53. The Committee was informed that the Charter of the Oversight Office would be updated before the IIA review and it would include the role of the Board and the Audit Committee in the selection process of the Inspector General.

54. The Committee:

- **Appreciated the efforts made by the Inspector General and his team; and**
- **Advised the Executive Board, in accordance with Article XIV of the General Regulations of WFP, to take note of the tenth *Report of the Inspector General*.**

THE MULTI-YEAR PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE 2010-13 (WFP MATTERS)

55. The Committee discussed various aspects of the document, welcoming the incorporated amendments as requested at its 136th Session.

56. The Committee expressed the need to change the period covered by the paper to 2011-2014.

57. The Committee:

- **Discussed and approved the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the Finance Committee (WFP Matters) and recommended its review by the Council, requesting to change the period of reference to 2011-2014.**

CRITERIA FOR CONSIDERATION OF WFP EXECUTIVE BOARD DOCUMENTS BY THE FAO FINANCE COMMITTEE

58. The Chairperson of the Finance Committee reported on his conversation with the President of WFP's Executive Board, in which they discussed the interpretation and implementation of the mandate of the Finance Committee. The discussion focused on the criteria and modalities for deciding and submitting documents to the Committee.

59. The Chairperson of the Finance Committee and the President of the Executive Board considered all documents that were submitted to the Finance Committee over the previous three

years. Following this review, they agreed that the Strategic Plan should not be brought to the Finance Committee attention because of the absence of financial implications of the document in its current form, which had changed over time.

60. Therefore the Committee highlighted the need to amend the WFP Financial Regulation 7.1, which specified that WFP's Strategic Plan must be submitted to both the Finance Committee and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). This change would need to be done in consultation with the Chair of the ACABQ.

61. The Committee:

- **Agreed that the Strategic Plan should not be reviewed by the Committee since it had no financial implications; and**
- **Recommended that WFP's Financial Regulation 7.1 should be revised in consultation with the Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.**

Other Matters

DATE AND PLACE OF THE HUNDRED AND FORTIETH SESSION

62. The Committee was informed that the 140th Session was tentatively scheduled to be held in Rome from 10 to 14 October 2011. The final dates of the session would be agreed in consultation with the Chairperson.

ANY OTHER MATTERS (FAO)

DEFINITION OF EFFICIENCY SAVINGS IN THE PROGRAMME OF WORK AND BUDGET 2012-13

63. This item was added under Any Other Matters at the request of a Member in order to: i) discuss in more detail the meaning of the term efficiency savings; and ii) clarify its implications, if any, for the re-allocation of resources and activities.

64. On the meaning of the term, it was recalled that the definition for efficiency savings was established by the 110th Session of the Council in November 1995 as "reductions in the cost of inputs without material negative impact upon the outputs"¹. Increased recovery of the cost of technical support to field activities was also included within this definition.

65. The Committee was informed that, with this definition in mind, the Organization had been vigorously pursuing efficiency savings since 1994 through the reduced cost of inputs, improved cost recovery measures and productivity gains, and had reported on its achievements consistently to the Governing Bodies.

66. The Committee recalled that, in the Programme of Work and Budget 2012-13, the Secretariat was forecasting biennial efficiency savings of USD 26.5 million.

67. Through the re-allocation of resources and activities, the Secretariat informed that it aimed to maximize the resources at its disposal, as also recognized by the Independent External Evaluation (IEE), which noted that "the Organization and its Members can be credited with recognizing the importance of attaining efficiency savings in FAO administration and technical programmes in order to maximize scarce budgetary resources for technical work."²

¹ CL 110/REP, para 24a)

² C2007/7 A.1, para 1222

68. The Committee also recalled that reallocation and reprogramming of resources was a Member Nations' decision.

69. The Committee recalled that, in the Programme of Work and Budget 2012-13, the forecasted efficiency savings is USD 26.5 million. The Committee was informed that resources identified through efficiency savings had been re-programmed in the following manner:

- USD 10.6 million of efficiency savings resulting from the implementation of the Immediate Plan of Action were re-programmed to fund other Immediate Plan of Action (IPA) projects; and
- USD 4 million, relating to improved cost recovery of overhead costs and technical services for extrabudgetary-funded projects, and USD 11.9 million of other savings were re-invested across all the Strategic and Functional Objectives.

70. The Committee recognized that this approach followed past practice, noting for example that in 2010-11, USD 17.4 million in savings stemming from the selective delayering of Director-level posts was reinvested in the programmes in line with the guidance provided in the IPA and discussed by the Working Groups of the Conference Committee on Follow-up to the Independent External Evaluation of FAO (CoC-IEE), as well as the Finance Committee during 2009.

71. The Committee:

- **recalled the importance of identifying efficiency savings to ensure optimal use of the budget and appreciated the Organization's efforts in this regard;**
- **with reference to paragraph 68, the Committee noted that Members may wish to review the re-allocation of efficiency savings in more detail in coming to a decision on the 2012-13 budget proposal; and**
- **highlighted that the PWB contained efficiency savings totalling USD 26.5 million, and noted that out of this total, USD 10.6 million of IPA savings had been re-allocated to IPA projects while the remainder had been largely re-invested across the strategic and functional objectives where the savings occurred.**

APPENDIX

DOCUMENTS FOR INFORMATION

- Report of the Executive Director on the Utilization of Contributions and Waivers of Costs (General Rules XII.4 and XIII.4 (g)) (doc. FC 139/INF/2)