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Independent review of the IPA-related governance reforms

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Independent review of the IPA-related governance reforms

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I. Background and purpose

1. In December 2013, the FAO Council reviewed and endorsed the ‘Arrangements for an Independent Review of Governance Reforms’,¹ to implement Action 2.74 of the Immediate Plan of Action for FAO Renewal (IPA). This action, approved by the FAO Conference in 2008, provides that “the Conference will assess the workings of the governance reforms, including the role and functioning of the Regional Conferences, with an independent review as an input to this process.”

2. The endorsed arrangements foresaw that an independent team of two external consultants supported by the FAO Office of Evaluation would carry out the Review during 2014, in time for their report to be discussed at the FAO Conference in June 2015.

3. This Paper provides an update on the methodology and elaboration of the areas of inquiry of the Review for presentation at the 15 May 2014 Informal Meeting of the Independent Chair of the Council with the Regional Group Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons Chairs (IMRGs), so that Members can collegially discuss key questions related to the Review with the Team. To facilitate discussion, the Paper is structured by Governing Body (GB) and the sections further briefly describe how the Team is approaching each of these bodies.

II. Methodology and progress

4. The Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the Independent Review established that the Team should examine the totality of the governance reforms and address each of the 76 actions, and that a key feature of the Review would consist of intensive consultation with FAO Members.

5. The ToRs also defined the evaluation criteria, the overall questions and approach and methods that should guide the work of the team. These were further fine-tuned by the Team, with the preparation of the following:

- a) A map of all relevant IPA actions and sub-actions related to governance reform and their implementation: this was completed by tracking agreed changes in the Basic Texts and any other relevant documents;
- b) Evaluation matrix: this includes detailed questions for each IPA action on governance, with indicators, sources of information and method for data-gathering;
- c) An analysis of changes in the governance set-up, including timing, sequence and number of sessions, contents of agendas and reports, type of recommendation, reporting lines, cost: the biennia 2006/2007, 2012/2013 and 2014/2015 will be used as references to compare over time;
- d) Benchmarking study with four UN bodies, namely UNDP, UNESCO, WHO and WFP, to provide suggestions to FAO Members on the three outstanding IPA actions as well as possible comparison on other aspects of governance;
- e) Perceptions of key stakeholders through in-depth interviews: semi-structured interviews are being carried out with FAO Senior Managers and Secretaries of

¹ CL 148/REP, paras 21-24; CL 148/10

- GBs; Permanent Representatives to FAO, both currently and previously in post; Member State participants in GBs;
- f) Perceptions of key stakeholders through a survey: a questionnaire will be sent in June 2014 to the Permanent Representatives and to the participants of Member States in all Governing Bodies sessions since 2012;²
- g) Direct observation of Governing Bodies: the team is sitting as an observer in a representative sample of Governing Body meetings taking place in the period February-June 2014, including all Regional Conferences.
6. As of mid-May 2014, the Team will have:
- participated in one IMRG;
 - attended all Regional Conferences;
 - carried out approximately half of the desk-review work;
 - held interviews with FAO Senior Management, the Independent Chairperson of the Council and most of the Chairpersons of FAO Governing Bodies.
7. Next steps will include:
- attend as observers the Programme Committee, the Finance Committee, the Joint Meeting of the PC and FC, the Council and COFO;
 - hold interviews with additional Permanent Representatives, both members and non-members of FAO Governing Bodies, and participants in COFO;
 - launch the questionnaire survey to FAO Members;
 - complete the desk-review;
 - prepare a draft report containing its findings and conclusions to be circulated to Members in October 2014;
 - discuss the draft report at Governing Body sessions in November and December 2014;
 - finalize the report by end of December 2014.

III. Conference

8. The Team is reviewing whether the content of the Conference sessions has evolved as foreseen in the IPA Actions to establish whether it has indeed become more focused, with a major theme for each session and side events for more informal interaction. It is also assessing changes in the timing of sessions within the overall cycle of GB deliberations, and the impact of the specific changes in the documentation of the meetings that were intended to create a crisper, result-oriented approach focusing on conclusions and decisions.

9. It is also ascertaining the view of the Member Countries (MCs) as to the effect of these changes on the work of the Conference, in terms of its treatment of global issues and its role as the final decision-making body on the work of the Organization.

IV. Council and Independent Chairperson of Council (ICC)

10. The Team is analysing how the Council plays its revised role in terms of defining strategy and priorities as well as oversight and monitoring over the implementation of

² The questionnaire to Permanent Representatives will be mailed through the FAO-hosted Permanent Representatives Web site.

governance decisions and the work of the Secretariat. The Review is also analysing the dialogue that the Council maintains with the Director-General and the Council's interaction with and monitoring of the GBs that report to it.

11. The Team notes that two of the three outstanding issues of IPA implementation are related to the Council: its size and its role in recommending the level of the budget to Conference. It will investigate other Organizations' practices on these matters in order to provide relevant experience for further consideration by the MCs.

12. The Team is examining the ICC's enhanced role in liaising between MCs and the Secretariat and with other Governing Bodies as appropriate, as well as in calling for consultations with representatives of the Regional Groups as necessary; keeping the Council abreast of developments in other fora of importance for FAO's mandate; and driving forward the improvements and ownership of FAO Governance. The Team is also looking at the length of stay in Rome established for the ICC function.

V. Programme Committee, Finance Committee and Joint Meeting

13. The Team is examining whether specific changes in the number of meetings and their timing and flexibility were implemented, as well as changes in the documentation, report drafting arrangements and final format. It is assessing whether these changes have had the desired impact in terms of more effective oversight by the MCs on the direction and work of the Organization, in particular with respect to programme priorities, strategy and budget, as well as administration, services and human resources. The synergy between the various GBs, the possibility of continuing duplication of work between them, the nature of documentation available in relation to the type of guidance expected, and follow up review of decisions made by the GBs have been identified as specific areas of inquiry.

VI. Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters

14. The Review is ascertaining whether the prescribed method for election of members has been put in place, including nominating representatives with the necessary legal qualifications, and whether it is operating to the satisfaction of the MCs.

VII. Regional Conferences (RCs)

15. The Review is studying the extent to which the RCs have been able to fulfil their new responsibilities in the overall governance of FAO's work. This will include consideration of how the functions have been implemented by the RCs and the results achieved in terms of recommendations with respect to policy and regulatory matters, as well as the direction and operations of the Organization in the regions and the dual reporting line to Conference and Council. In terms of the Organization's work in the region, the RCs role in considering FAO's work at the regional, sub-regional and country levels will be considered.

16. The scope of the responsibilities of the RCs between sessions will also be reviewed as well as the workload and financial implications of the Regional Offices in their function as RC Secretariat. The Team notes that there has been a substantial variety in the organization and content of the RCs from region to region. It will provide some analysis of this variety as

a contribution to the discussion of possible standardization, but also to exchange what it has found to be good practices that might be of interest to other RCs.

VIII. Technical Committees (TCs)

17. The Team is reviewing how the dual reporting line to both Conference and Council has functioned, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the TCs themselves, both while in session and inter-sessionally. Specific areas of inquiry include the role of MCs in setting the agenda and defining priority areas, the balance between policy/regulatory and FAO-specific discussion, internal organization of the TCs, including the establishment of bureaux to carry out inter-sessional work and the work of FAO Technical Departments as Secretary for the relevant TC.

18. The Team notes that there has been a significant level of autonomy between the TCs in terms of their organization, rules of procedure and working methods. A comparison will be made among them, to provide information to the MCs on these differences for their consideration.

IX. Ministerial Meetings and Statutory Bodies

19. The Review Team is assessing the extent to which Council and/or Conference have used their authority to call Ministerial Meetings, and whether the reports of these meetings have been considered directly by Conference.

20. In addition, the Team is assessing to what extent Statutory Bodies have brought issues to the Council and Conference through their respective Technical Committees, as well as the extent to which the review of the Statutory Bodies by the FAO Secretariat, an action also foreseen by the IPA, has triggered further initiatives about their governance, by the Secretariat or their Members.

X. Audit and Evaluation functions

21. The Team is reviewing how the information provided by the Office of the Inspector General to the Finance Committee (FC) is used in its oversight and decision-making functions. It is also assessing follow-up mechanisms designed to track how their decisions have been implemented within the Organization and any subsequent actions by the FC.

22. The Team is also reviewing the relevance and timeliness of the evaluation reports by OED to the Programme Committee and Council in terms of enabling their oversight and decision-making roles, as well as any follow-up mechanisms in place to assess the status of implementation of their decisions.

XI. Other issues

23. The Team notes that one of the three outstanding issues regarding IPA implementation relates to the qualifications of candidates for the position of FAO Director-General. It will investigate other Organizations' practices on this matter in order to provide relevant experience for further consideration by the MCs.

24. The Multi-Year Programme of Action (MYPOW) documents were introduced through the IPA for every GB, with the exception of the Conference. However, there is diversity among the MYPOWs agreed by each GB. The Team is reviewing whether the present MYPOWs are considered to be a useful tool by the MCs as well as by the Secretariat, and whether there are possible modifications to increase their utility.

25. Among the over-arching questions that the Team is looking at in the course of its work are:

- a) the extent to which the participation of Members and their ownership of the governance mechanisms of FAO has changed through the governance reforms.
- b) the extent to which the reforms have led to greater inclusiveness and transparency in the governance of FAO; and
- c) changes in the cost of the new governance mechanisms.