

165th Session of the Council - written Correspondence Procedure

Item 13 - Progress Report on Rome-based Agencies collaboration

Secretariat response to written questions from the Council

The Secretariat expresses its appreciation of the comments from the Members on Item 13, *Progress Report on Rome-based Agencies collaboration*. The Secretariat takes note of all comments and suggestions and is pleased to acknowledge Members' recognition that collaboration with WFP and IFAD has increased and taken a new strategic direction for the future, and that the Progress Report is much improved, more evidence-based and strategic.

Regarding the query about the indirect and direct support costs of the joint programme in the Sahel, the new FAO Cost Recovery Policy (endorsed by Council in CL 151/REP, paragraph 11.e) was progressively introduced from 2018 for new Trust Fund projects being formulated while projects that were already ongoing at 1 January 2018 continued to apply the legacy support cost model for the lifespan of the project. The legacy and new support cost policies therefore ran in parallel throughout the 2018-19 biennium making any analysis of the new policy during that biennium partial and incomplete. Given this background, Management considers that it would be premature at this stage to perform a review of the cost recovery policy and such review should not take place prior to having at least a full biennium experience and data on the implementation of the new policy.

On the queries regarding the joint Sahel Programme to Respond to the Challenges of Covid-19, Conflict and Climate Change (SD3C), the RBAs have developed a logical and results framework with a theory of change, and the monitoring and evaluation plan, and have outlined the details of the unique contributions of each agency. This information together with regular updates will be made available to Members. The Programme is in direct support of the achievement of the SDGs and in line with the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, specifically with strategic goal three on building long-term resilience. FAO's technical support to the six participating countries with a total budget of USD 15 million will particularly focus on the development of productive assets through water and soil restoration, construction and rehabilitation, distribution of agricultural kits, promotion of water-smart agricultural and climate-resilient practices, capacity building of farmers' organizations and cross-border market integration etc.

Regarding the feasibility assessment on strengthening collaboration in administrative services, the RBAs are in the process of finalizing the first assessment which will be shared with Members as soon as it is finalized.

In relation to the three country pilot plans in Colombia, Indonesia and Niger, the RBAs will make available the country plans once finalized. In general, the RBAs emphasize the importance of RBA country planning within the context of UN Development System reform processes, ensuring alignment with the UN Cooperation Frameworks.

In relation to recommendations to continue strong RBA collaboration in the preparation of the 2021 Food Systems Summit, the RBAs are committed to high quality joint efforts, and fostering strong linkages across the RBA-led Action Tracks. Each agency anchors one of the five action tracks and contributes regularly to those anchored by the other RBAs. Weekly meetings between the RBAs and the Summit Secretariat are ongoing.

The Secretariat appreciates the acknowledgement of the importance of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the encouragement of Members to continue the joint support to the CFS and to ensure implementation of its guidelines and policy recommendations. FAO remains fully committed to the adoption of CFS recommendations, policies and guidelines. FAO has dedicated and extensive programs

on the implementation of the VGGT¹ and CFS-RAI² and is looking forward to putting into practice the instruments currently under development.

With regards to the Covid-19 response at global, headquarters, regional and country levels, the Secretariat reiterates its commitment to an increased level and strength of RBA coordination in the face of the pandemic.

The Secretariat acknowledges the importance of further integration of the RBA collaboration within broader UN Development system repositioning efforts, aiming to give a more strategic direction to the RBA joint efforts, and also benefit in real terms from UN system-wide initiatives and frameworks, including Common Country Analysis and UN Cooperation Frameworks, new Business Operations Strategies (BOS 2.0) and the UN efficiency agenda among others.

¹ Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security

² Principles for Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems