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FAO Country Office Network – Current status and way forward

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1. This Agenda item is to provide an update on the outcome of the discussions at the five Regional Conferences on the document *FAO Country Office Network – Current Status and Way Forward*.¹ Due to the timing of two Regional Conferences in April and May 2024, the Joint Meeting of the 138th Session of the Programme and the 199th Session of the Finance Committees in May 2024 received an oral presentation by Management, while for the 175th Session of the Council in June 2024, the current document will be complemented by an Annex that provides additional information on the outcome of these Regional Conference discussions.
2. The overview below recalls the process to date.

174th Session of the FAO Council (December 2023)

3. The FAO Council in December 2023 considered the document *Review of the Decentralized Offices Network of FAO*² which noted that a modern and efficient FAO Decentralized Offices Network is key to supporting countries in reaching their targets for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
4. The document recalled the efforts undertaken in 2020-21 to address the efficiency and effectiveness of the business models of the Regional and Subregional Offices and highlighted that to deliver successfully under the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31, FAO Country Offices needed to position themselves strategically within the UN system in responding collectively to aspirations of countries in the attainment of the SDGs while fully observing international standards of accountability, internal control and good management.
5. The Council, *inter alia*, appreciated efforts implemented to address the efficiency and effectiveness of the business models of Decentralized Offices; noted that documents on the Country Offices were being prepared for discussion at the 2024 Regional Conferences; and looked forward to further information on the outcome of the Regional Conference discussions.³

The Regional Conferences (February – May 2024)

6. Each Regional Conference considered its document *FAO Country Office Network – Current Status and Way Forward*. The document responded to the guidance received from the Governing Bodies to strengthen the Organization's work at country levels and proposed measures to address current challenges, prioritizing and tailoring support to countries' specific needs.
7. The document outlined five *overarching principles* guiding the adjustment of FAO country presence:
 - a. the proposed approach and resource allocations are tailored to countries' evolution, specificities, capacities and needs;
 - b. flexibility, improved agility (including through pooling of resources) and strengthened capacity (structure and resources) are built in;
 - c. office staffing structures reflect modern ways of operating and delivering, with an improved balance between staff and non-staff resources and with due attention to internal controls;
 - d. changes are to be implemented in a progressive manner including taking into account current staffing; and,
 - e. proposed adjustments do not negatively impact the regional budgetary allocation to the FAO Representation Network.
8. It then outlined *four country* models describing the proposed indicative staffing levels to be funded by Regular Programme resources to meet the challenges of delivering FAO's multifaceted and global mandate in a rapidly evolving environment. The models take into consideration a combination of factors, including country income level; specific vulnerabilities such as climate change impacts,

¹ APRC/24/11; NERC/24/8; LARC/24/4 Rev.1; ARC/24/10; and ERC/24/11

² CL 174/INF/10

³ CL 174/REP, paragraph 40.

conflicts or protracted crises; size of the country programme; and location of the Country Office in relation to the Regional or Subregional Office.

9. The document also highlighted that, with these models, an increased share of overall resources would be available for more flexible expenditures, including other human resources and general operating expenses.

10. The Regional Conferences were invited to:

- provide feedback and guidance on the proposed measures;
- express in principle support to the set of proposals outlined, in particular the five overarching principles and the four proposed country models; and
- request Management to proceed with a transparent process of consultations with countries for the progressive implementation of the proposed arrangements.