

# conference

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FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ROME

## Twenty-fifth Session

Rome, 11-30 November 1989

### RETURN OF THE REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE NEAR EAST TO THE REGION

#### I. BACKGROUND

1.1 The Twentieth Session of the FAO Conference, held in November 1979, adopted Resolution 20/79 (Appendix A) concerning the FAO Regional Office for the Near East which, inter alia, decided that henceforth and until decided otherwise by the Conference, the Cairo headquarters of the Regional Office for the Near East would be closed.

1.2 The Regional Office in Cairo was effectively closed on 31 May 1980. Since then, the FAO regional programme for the Near East has been implemented by the technical units at Headquarters. The programme has been implemented under the supervision of the Regional Representative for the Near East.

1.3 On several occasions, especially during successive FAO Regional Conferences for the Near East held since the closure of the Office in Cairo, in 1979, Member Nations of the Region have expressed the view that the quality of programme implementation would be significantly improved if RNEA were to operate in the Region. Member Nations of the Region emphasized this point more emphatically during the Nineteenth Regional Conference for the Near East held in Muscat, Oman, in March 1988. The Regional Conference "expressed its desire that the FAO Regional Office for the Near East be returned to the Region". It called upon the Director-General to include this issue in the provisional Agenda for the forthcoming Twenty-fifth Session of the Conference of FAO, to be held in November 1989. <sup>1/</sup>

1.4 The Director-General, in complying with this request, felt that a preliminary discussion on this subject by the Council at its Ninety-fourth Session in November 1988 would enable the Council to provide such guidance as it deemed fit, for the development of a full proposal to be considered by the Council and for submission to the Conference in November 1989.

1.5 At its Ninety-fourth Session, the Council accordingly considered document CL 94/7 entitled "Examination of Proposal Regarding Regional Office for the Near East".

<sup>1/</sup> NERC/88/REP, para. 40

1.6 The Council "fully endorsed the desire of the Member Nations of the Near East Region that the Regional Office should return to the Region. It agreed that while the programmes for the Region had been implemented effectively from Headquarters, the quality of implementation and the impact of the programmes would be significantly enhanced if the Office were to operate once again in the Region." 1/

1.7 It "noted the interest of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt to resume the provision of host facilities for the Office" and "generally expressed appreciation for this offer. At the same time, it did not wish to exclude consideration of any offer that might be made by any other Government of the Near East Region and felt that it would be desirable for them to be consulted in the matter. It requested the Director-General to take the necessary measures for this consultation". 2/

1.8 The Council "noted some preliminary estimates in connection with the return of the Office to the Region, relating to the relocation of staff and dependants and acquisition of furniture and equipment." 3/ In this connection it "noted that the Director-General would consult the governments which had provided voluntary contributions for the relocation of the Office in Rome on whether they would agree to their share of the unutilized balances being used for the return of the Office to the Region" and "agreed that the Director-General should submit a full proposal on the return of the Office to the Region to the Council, for forwarding to the Conference at its Twenty-fifth Session in November 1989." 4/

## II. DEVELOPMENTS

2.1 In following up the Council's recommendations, the Director-General consulted governments of the Near East Region to ascertain their wishes, including the readiness of any of them to host the Regional Office and bear the legal and financial obligations entailed. The outcome of the consultation confirmed that no government in the Region other than that of the Arab Republic of Egypt offers to provide host facilities for RNEA.

2.2 The Director-General also consulted those Member Nations of the Region which had provided voluntary contributions for the relocation of the office in Rome in 1979, on the release of their share of the unutilized balance to be eventually used to help finance the expenditure involved for the relocation of RNEA in the Region, if so decided by the FAO Conference. These consultations did not produce any positive response.

2.3 In October 1989, the Director-General sent a mission to Cairo in order to obtain detailed information regarding the nature and extent of the contribution that the Egyptian Government intended to make to enable the Regional Office to resume its activities. The same mission also advised the

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1/ CL 94/REP, para. 207

2/ CL 94/REP, para. 208

3/ CL 94/REP, para. 209

4/ CL 94/REP, para. 210

Egyptian authorities regarding the nature of FAO's possible contribution to this undertaking. The Egyptian authorities have agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, which specifies their commitments, as well as a guaranteed date of completion of the work (31 May 1990); this timing should enable the Regional Office to be re-opened by 1 September 1990.

### III. OPTIONS

3.1 The Member Nations of the Region have expressed the desire to see the Regional Office for the Near East relocated in the Region. The Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt has generously offered to host the Office again in Cairo. The Conference has, therefore, two options before it for consideration and decision:

- (a) Retaining the Regional Office in Rome;
- (b) Relocating the Regional Office in Cairo, Egypt.

3.2 While the first option would maintain the status quo, the second option would involve financial obligations for both the Organization and the Host Country, as shown in the following paragraphs.

### IV. BUDGETARY AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Should the Conference decide to relocate the Regional Office in Cairo, Egypt, and taking into consideration the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding recently signed by the Egyptian Authorities and FAO, the budgetary and financial implications would be as follows:

#### A. TO BE BORNE BY THE ORGANIZATION

(i) New Posts: While no new Professional posts are envisaged, an additional 27 General Service posts would be needed (Personnel, Accounting and Clerks, Stenographers, Typists, etc.). These new posts are included in the proposed Programme of Work and Budget for 1990-91. They are essential for the proper functioning of the Office. These, and the existing 11 posts, would bring the total number of General Service posts to 38 as compared to 58 posts before the closure of the Regional Office in Cairo. Because of lower costs in Cairo, and their phased establishment during the biennium, no additional provision is needed in the 1990-91 Programme of Work and Budget to cover the cost of these proposed new General Service posts.

(ii) Relocation of RNEA Staff from Rome: A one-time cost, estimated at US\$ 350 000, would be required to transfer to Cairo, Egypt, RNEA staff members who are at present stationed at Headquarters in Rome together with their dependants - a total of 33 persons. The cost includes payment of air-tickets, installation allowances and removal and shipment of household effects.

(iii) Furniture and Equipment: A one-time cost, estimated at US\$ 600 000, would be required for the purchase and shipment of the office furniture, archives, vehicles and communication and other equipment.

(iv) Operating Expenses: Operating expenses in 1990-91, at the Cairo location, would be determined by the timing from which the Office were to start functioning there. It is envisaged that with the initiation of the operations in Cairo towards the end of 1990, savings in the budgetary provision could cover the above-mentioned one-time costs amounting to US\$ 950,000. In subsequent biennia, a budgetary provision would have to be provided for the full biennial cost of the new General Service posts and for recurring General Operating Expenses covering utilities, maintenance of premises, furniture, equipment and vehicles and miscellaneous operating expenses. The total budgetary provision could however remain at the level proposed for 1990-91.

B. EXPECTED TO BE BORNE BY THE HOST COUNTRY

Rehabilitation of Premises: Owing to the long period of non-occupation of the premises after the closure of the Regional Office in Cairo, some major restructuring, alterations and repairs to these premises are essential before they can be re-occupied. In the light of the Memorandum of Understanding, the Egyptian Government is, therefore, expected and has offered to bear all the relevant costs. In addition to structural repairs and modernization, the rehabilitation includes the procurement and installation of the requisite water plant with new pipeline; new electric wiring, switchboard, meters and connections; and suitable parking space.

V. CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Since 1 June 1980 the Near East Region has been served from Rome. In spite of constraints, the programmes have been implemented in an effective and constructive manner from Headquarters. However, in view of the desire of the Member Nations concerned, that the Regional Office be returned to the Region and considering that the quality of implementation and the impact of the programme would be enhanced if the Office were to function again from the Region, the Conference is invited to consider and approve the proposed return of the Regional Office to Cairo. A Draft Resolution on the relocation of the Regional Office for the Near East to Cairo, Egypt, is submitted as Appendix B for adoption by the Conference.

Resolution 20/79

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE NEAR EAST

THE CONFERENCE,

Firmly convinced for the need to promote fruitful and harmonious cooperation in the field of food and agriculture, including fisheries and forestry, between all countries of the Near East Region,

Recognizing the past contributions to this end made by the Regional Office for the Near East in its present location,

Deeply concerned, however, by the fact that, since April 1979, the operations of the Organization in the Near East Region and, in particular, those of the Regional Office for the Near East, have been seriously impaired,

Acknowledging the responsibility of the Conference to decide on the establishment and location or relocation of the Regional Offices of the Organization,

Considering, however, that, in principle, the views of the countries of any region concerning the location of the FAO Regional Office should have primary importance,

Being responsive and sympathetic to the views of the majority of Member Nations in the Near East Region,

Having reviewed the detailed and objective information provided by the Director-General in document C 79/25-Rev.1,

Considering that, in present circumstances it would be in the best interest of all member countries, and particularly those of the Near East Region, to find a solution which could respect the interest of all Member Nations, while giving due acknowledgement to the views of the majority of the Member Nations of the Near East Region,

1. Decides that, henceforth and until decided otherwise by the Conference, the Cairo headquarters of the Regional Office for the Near East will be closed;

2. Requests the Director-General, using his best and unfettered judgement, to determine which regional activities of the Organization in the Near East should, in the circumstances, be terminated and which should continue to be carried out from another location or locations, particularly those in other countries within the region and the Rome headquarters of the Organization, as appropriate and feasible;

3. Further requests the Director-General, acting in accordance with the relevant rules and regulations of the Organization, to take all necessary measures for the implementation of this resolution, including the separation of locally recruited General Service staff, the retention, termination or redeployment of other staff as appropriate, the withdrawal and redistribution of equipment and supplies, and the transfer of the archives and bank deposits of RNEA to the Rome headquarters of the Organization;
4. Accepts with appreciation the generous offer of Member Nations of the region to finance the additional cost of these measures by providing, on a voluntary basis, the sum of US\$ 1 million as a Trust Fund to be administered by the Director-General;
5. Authorizes the Director-General, in order to implement these measures and in addition to the voluntary funds mentioned in paragraph 4 above, to make the necessary adjustments in the approved 1980-81 Regular Programme budget intended to cover the activities of the Regional Office for the Near East and other regional activities of the Organization in the Near East;
6. Calls upon all Member Nations, especially those within the Near East Region, to provide their full cooperation to the Director-General, to the staff of the Organization, and to the Member Nations concerned, to ensure the smooth and effective implementation of this resolution, in particular during the interim period which will elapse until all measures which the Director-General will consider it necessary to take have become fully effective.

(Adopted 28 November 1979)

DRAFT RESOLUTION FOR THE CONFERENCE

RETURN OF THE REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE NEAR EAST TO CAIRO, EGYPT

THE CONFERENCE,

Recalling Resolution 20/79 on the Regional Office for the Near East,

Noting with appreciation that since the closure of the Regional Office in Cairo, the FAO regional programmes and activities have been carried out in an effective manner through the requisite coordination and cooperation between the Regional Office and the technical and administrative units at Headquarters,

Concurring with the view of Member Nations of the Near East Region, endorsed by the Council at its Ninety-fourth Session, that while programmes for the Region have been implemented effectively from Headquarters during the past ten years, the quality of implementation and the impact of the programmes would be significantly enhanced if the Office were to operate once again in the Region,

Noting that the cost to the Organization of relocating the Office in the Region could be covered from the provisions for the Regional Office for the Near East in the proposed Programme of Work and Budget 1990-91,

Welcoming the generous offer made by the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt to resume the provision of host facilities for the Office and its agreement to bear the cost of rehabilitating the old premises in Cairo, as confirmed by the recent Memorandum of Understanding,

1. Decides that the headquarters of the Regional Office for the Near East be re-opened in its old premises in Cairo, Egypt, as soon as possible and no later than 1 September 1990;
2. Requests the Director-General to take all necessary measures for the implementation of this Resolution and conclude negotiations with the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt to ensure that complete and adequate rehabilitation work of the premises of the Office is carried out according to a mutually agreed timetable so as to permit the re-installation of the Office to commence no later than 1 June 1990;
3. Authorizes the Director-General, in order to implement these measures, to make the necessary adjustments in the approved 1990-91 Programme of Work and Budget, in connection with the relocation of the Office in Cairo.
4. Calls upon all Member Nations, especially those within the Near East Region, to provide their full cooperation to the Director-General and the staff of the Organization, and to the Member Nations concerned, to ensure the smooth and effective implementation of this Resolution.

(Adopted ... November 1989)