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COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL MATTERS

Hundred and Twenty-first Session

Rome, 28-30 October 2024

Update on the Dissemination of Memoranda of Understanding signed by FAO

I. Introduction

1. This document is presented to the Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (“CCLM” or “the Committee”), recalling that, in the Report of its 120th Session, the Committee “*recognized that [the dissemination of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)] signed by FAO is an ongoing process and looked forward to further updates at its 121st Session*”.² At its 175th Session in June 2024, the Council endorsed the considerations of the Committee on this matter and “*requested FAO to accelerate its work towards the dissemination of MoUs signed with other parties*”.³

II. Background

2. At its 119th Session in October 2023, the Committee “*stressed the fundamental importance of dissemination and its application in line with UN system best practices*”.⁴ On this basis, upon endorsement of the Committee’s considerations and conclusions on this matter by the Council at its 174th Session in December 2023,⁵ steps were taken to initiate the process of dissemination.

3. As reported to the Committee at its 120th Session in March 2024, to disseminate “*a list of the MoUs concluded between the Organization and other intergovernmental organizations*”,⁶ a dedicated, password-protected internal portal was created on the FAO Members Gateway as an *interim* solution until a more robust, user-friendly and comprehensive platform is developed.⁷ The Committee welcomed the steps taken to initiate the dissemination of MoUs signed by FAO with other intergovernmental organizations, as well as the efforts made to increase transparency.⁸

¹ For the purpose of this document, the term “MoUs” includes general cooperation and partnership agreements.

² [CL175/12](#), paragraph 15.

³ [CL175/REP](#), paragraph 23 (b)(i).

⁴ [CL 174/10](#), paragraph 16.

⁵ [CL 174/REP](#), paragraph 30 (a)(ii).

⁶ [CL 174/10](#), paragraph 19.

⁷ [CCLM 120/3](#), paragraphs 12-13.

⁸ [CL 175/12](#), paragraph 11.

Documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

4. As of 1 September 2024, dissemination efforts remain ongoing and a total of 87 MoUs have been uploaded to the FAO Members Gateway in furtherance of the interim solution.

III. Update on the activities undertaken to accelerate the dissemination of MoUs signed by FAO

A. Unification of corporate data systems

5. The application of the principle of transparency to partnerships entered by FAO has also been addressed by the Finance Committee. At its 195th Session in March 2023, the Finance Committee “*recommended [...] the availability of information on these partnerships to all Members [being] reflected in the results framework*”, in the context of Functional Objective 7 focused on the quality of partnerships developed and established.⁹

6. As presented to the CCLM at its 120th Session, there is not, at present, a unified corporate system accessible to Members which contains copies of MoUs entered by FAO, as well as information on the quality of partnerships and results of partnership activities.

7. The only partial exception is the CONNECT Portal,¹⁰ which is a password-protected corporate partnership relation management (CRM) system that uses Salesforce to manage private sector partnerships entered by FAO. As reported earlier during the 119th Session of the CCLM, “[w]ithin the context of the implementation of the FAO Strategy for Private Sector Engagement, 2021-2025,^[...] and in response to the request of the FAO Council to increase transparency on FAO’s partnerships with the private sector,^[...] all MoUs and other agreements establishing a general framework for cooperation with the private sector are available to the Members on the Connect Portal,^[...] a password-protected platform available to the representatives of FAO’s Members”.¹¹ Members are able to access the CONNECT Portal through a “Level 2” log-in.

8. The CONNECT Portal is in line with FAO’s renewed commitment to increase efficiency and transparency, and to reinforce the digitalization of FAO. FAO has made a considerable investment in establishing and maintaining the CONNECT Portal and reports on this regularly to the Programme Committee.¹² To capitalize on this investment, improve the monitoring of the quality and impact of partnerships and efficiently respond to Members’ recommendations in the CCLM and Finance Committee, which were endorsed by Council, FAO intends to expand the scope of the CONNECT Portal to cover the entire range of partnerships entered by FAO.

9. The CONNECT Portal is well positioned to serve as a united corporate system in view of its existing functionalities and security and data protection safeguards. Its expansion would have the additional benefit of also supporting the delivery of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31 and Country Programming Frameworks (CPFs) at various levels by enhancing cross-division/office collaboration, offering built-in automation tools, streamlining programmatic tasks and improving efficiency.

10. To achieve this, additional development is required to expand the scope and functionality of the CONNECT Portal and to ensure the safe and appropriate migration of data from several corporate systems. This would strengthen the monitoring of FAO’s strategic partnerships by implementing more robust key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess their effectiveness. The unified reporting system will capture trends in FAO’s partnerships with a variety of stakeholders at global, regional, and national levels.

⁹ [CL172/9](#), paragraph 21 (f).

¹⁰ <https://www.fao.org/connect-private-sector/en/>.

¹¹ [CCLM 119/3](#) paragraph 7.

¹² Last updated [PC135/INF/2](#) in March 2023.

B. Expected timeframe

11. The Partnerships and UN Collaboration Division (PSU) is working closely with the Digital FAO and Agro-informatics Division (CSI) to identify and undertake specific activities necessary for the expansion of the CONNECT Portal, as described above. These include expanding the functionalities of the CONNECT Portal, migrating existing partnerships-related data, developing internal processes and procedures as may be required, and building the capacity of FAO personnel to access and use the newly expanded CONNECT Portal.

12. It is anticipated that the entire process will be implemented and rolled out by the end of 2025.

IV. Suggested action by the Committee

13. The Committee is invited to take note of this update, and to make such comments and give guidance as it deems appropriate.