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JOINT MEETING

**Hundred and Forty-first Session of the Programme Committee and
Two Hundred and Sixth Session of the Finance Committee**

Rome, 3-7 November 2025

**Diagnostic exercise with regard to potential reforms [*cf.* [Resolution 3/2025](#)]
Update**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This document provides an update on the *Diagnostic exercise with regard to potential reforms*, undertaken by the Office of Evaluation (OED) with support from the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), in response to Conference [Resolution 3/2025](#).
- The Exercise consolidates evidence from evaluations, audits, and reviews conducted between 2010 and 2025, complemented by targeted consultations and surveys with Members and FAO personnel.
- While the compressed timeframe (July–October 2025) limits the scope of new analysis and broader consultations, the Exercise represents an important first step toward a consolidated evidence base on areas of organizational improvement.
- The findings will inform the Member-based open-ended ad hoc working groups, whose final reports and recommendations will be presented to the 181st Session of the Council in December 2026.

GUIDANCE SOUGHT FROM THE JOINT MEETING

- The Joint Meeting is invited to review the update on the Diagnostic Exercise with regard to potential reforms and provide guidance as deemed appropriate.

Draft Advice

The Joint Meeting:

- **acknowledged the progress made in implementing the Diagnostic Exercise with regard to potential reforms pursuant to Conference Resolution 3/2025;**
- **recognized the value of the Exercise in consolidating existing evidence to support Member-led deliberations on areas for institutional improvement; and**
- **encouraged continued progress in producing the Report for consideration by the Council in 2026.**

I. Introduction

1. The *Diagnostic exercise with regard to potential reforms (Diagnostic Exercise)* was designed and conducted by the FAO Office of Evaluation (OED), working independently with support from the FAO Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System (JIU).
2. FAO Management and a group of external experts will be invited to review the draft report, which will be refined based on their feedback before submission to the Council. OED gratefully acknowledges the strong response and active engagement of FAO personnel and Members in this Exercise. Their participation reflects a shared recognition of the Exercise's value and its potential to contribute meaningfully to the continued strengthening of FAO.

II. Methodology

3. FAO has undergone numerous assessments over the years, including reviews by external bodies such as JIU, as well as internal and external audits and independent evaluations. By building on these existing efforts, FAO can identify areas for potential improvements while maximizing the value of prior investments — saving time, reducing costs, and optimizing human resources.
4. However, previous assessments may not have fully addressed issues of particular interest to Members or may have lacked sufficient depth in certain areas. For example, Members have expressed interest in FAO's Constitution (Basic Texts), a topic typically outside the scope of these assessments. To fill this gap, the *Diagnostic Exercise* was expanded to include targeted consultations and surveys with both Members and FAO personnel in leadership roles.
5. The analysis (ongoing) will undergo rigorous technical quality assurance and will triangulate results from the following sources:
 - a) **Recommendations from independent assessments of FAO.** These include reviews¹ (2010-2024), evaluations (2018-2025), and external audits (2017-2023) of FAO. These resulted in more than 300 recommendations and suggestions to address areas of improvement.
 - b) **Management Action Plans resulting from internal audits.** OIG analyzed 53 audit reports issued over the past 10 years (2016–2025) that resulted in 168 Management Action Plans (MAPs) with prioritized changes that were still open as of September 2025.
 - c) **Input from Members.** FAO has 194 Member Nations, one Member Organization, and two Associate Members. Members provided input through a survey administered in September 2025, hybrid consultations with all FAO Regional Groups organized by the Independent Chair of the Council, and in-person individual and small group meetings organized upon Members' requests.
 - d) **Interviews with FAO Management.** OED organized one-on-one consultations with FAO leadership in headquarters and the field. This included all Deputies and Assistants Director-General (13), Subregional Coordinators (7), Heads of Liaison Offices (6), Heads of Partnership and Liaison Offices (8), and other Directors (27). Leaders of both staff unions were also interviewed (3). In addition, consultations included up to three FAORs in each region selected by their ADGs, as well as deputies and senior technical personnel selected by their Directors. As a result, a total of 100 individuals were interviewed. The response rate to invitations was 100 percent.
 - e) **Survey of FAO Representatives.** FAORs across country offices were surveyed to solicit opinions regarding areas for improvement. A large share of FAORs responded already, representing most FAO country offices.

¹ This includes system-wide reviews conducted by JIU and that include recommendations for FAO.

- f) **Review of relevant documents.** A wide range of documents informed the analysis. These include publicly available documents as well as non-publicly available FAO-commissioned or -created documents. A full list of documents will be provided in the report's bibliography.

III. Limitations

6. The ambitious timeline for this *Diagnostic Exercise* (July to October 2025) presents two key constraints. First, it limits the ability to include broader consultations with FAO personnel. In line with the *Exercise's* intent to build on existing information, the study draws on previous surveys of FAO personnel—such as the one conducted in 2024—and earlier reviews and evaluations that engaged a wide range of individuals.

7. Second, the compressed timeframe restricts OED's capacity to conduct additional analyses that could further strengthen or refine the evidence base on areas for improvement. Despite these limitations, the *Diagnostic Exercise* provides a valuable starting point— a summary analysis intended to support the Member-based open-ended ad hoc working groups in identifying areas that may benefit from improvements and preparing their final reports, which will include recommendations for concrete next steps to be presented to the 181st Session of the Council in December 2026.

IV. Next Steps

8. OED is currently analyzing data collected and drafting sections of the report, which will be submitted in November 2025 to the Secretary-General of the Conference and the Council for translation. As this work is still in progress, the estimates presented here — such as counts and percentages — are preliminary and may be updated in the final version of the report.