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TWENTY-NINTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST

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Global and Regional Emergency Issues

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I. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. According to FAO's Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), some 37 countries are currently in crises that require external assistance.¹ Natural disasters, conflicts and diseases such as HIV/AIDS, alone or in combination, are the main drivers of these crises.
2. Natural disasters, particularly hydro-metrological disasters such as floods, hurricanes and droughts, are on the increase. In 2006, 427 disasters associated with natural hazards affected almost 143 million people globally and resulted in more than 23 000 deaths.² Although the number of victims decreased from 160 million in 2005, the frequency was almost equal to the 433 disasters recorded in 2005, and well above the annual average of 393 for the period 2000-2004.
3. These figures conform to what seems to be a continuous increase in natural hazard events. According to the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED), from 1987 to 1997, the number of disasters varied between 200 and 250. However, from 2000 to 2006, this figure almost doubled. While the rise in the total number of disasters may be attributed partially to improved reporting, the impact of global warming is increasingly recognized as a key factor in this process.
4. This trend of increased volatility and extremes in climatic-related events in 2006 was clearly demonstrated in Africa. The five countries worst hit by disasters in 2006, in terms of proportion of victims, were all African. Southern Africa suffered a combination of cyclones, flooding and drought, the greater Horn of Africa was subjected to drought and floods, while drought was also widespread in the Sahel Region. The total number of people affected by drought increased from 30 million in 2005 to 40 million in 2006. Although only approximately 14 percent of the world's population lives in Africa, its inhabitants accounted for 50 percent of all drought victims in 2006.
5. While the number of violent conflicts across the globe has been decreasing, conflict still remains a cause of acute food insecurity. Thirteen of the 29 countries listed by GIEWS, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Sudan, list conflict as a main cause of their food insecurity. Protracted conflict, civil strife and human insecurity in combination with recurrent natural disasters can create complex emergencies from which people and countries can take years to recover.
6. It is important to note that some 75 percent of the people living below the dollar-a-day poverty line live in rural areas and most of them have agriculture-based livelihoods. This population is among the most vulnerable and, thus, likely to be disproportionately affected by disasters and conflict, making protection and recovery of their livelihoods a high national and international priority.

II. FAO's ROLE IN EMERGENCIES

7. FAO plays an important role in assisting countries in preventing, mitigating, preparing for and responding to food and agricultural emergencies. FAO's strategy focuses on strengthening capacity for disaster preparedness, forecasting and providing early warning and assessing emergency needs. It also assists in formulating and implementing programmes for agricultural relief and rehabilitation that favor the transition from relief to development, improving analysis

¹ As of December 2007. See <http://www.fao.org/giews/english/hotspots/index.htm> for the latest update.

² Data presented in the introduction is drawn from the CRED International Disaster Database, *Universite Catholique de Louvain*, Brussels (www.em-dat.net). For methodological reasons, it covers the calendar year 2006. Data in subsequent sections refers to the reporting period 01 June 2006 to 31 May 2007.

of underlying causes of disasters, and strengthening local capacities to reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience.

8. FAO's involvement in emergencies and rehabilitation has risen significantly in the past ten years, reflecting the increase in both the number and scale of crises (natural and human-induced), as well as the recognition that FAO's expertise in farming, livestock, fisheries and forestry is crucial in emergency relief and rehabilitation efforts. Rural populations in the developing world are often the most vulnerable to disasters, because most of these communities are dependent upon agriculture for food security and livelihoods.

9. Emergencies have absorbed from 40 to 50 percent of FAO's extra-budgetary resources in recent biennia. The current emergency and rehabilitation programmes, valued at around US\$590 million, are concentrated in 40 countries experiencing food and agricultural emergencies around the world.

III. FAO EMERGENCY AND REHABILITATION ACTIVITIES IN THE NEAR EAST REGION

A. OVERVIEW

10. Within the Near East Region, FAO's emergency and rehabilitation programmes are valued at US\$268 million (some 45 percent of the global value). They are being implemented in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Yemen. There are also several regional transboundary plant pest and animal disease control programmes in the Region. FAO has responded to the scale and complexity of disasters in the Near East by providing technical support and coordination services to rebuild agriculture-based livelihoods in addition to seeds and tools.

B. AFGHANISTAN

11. FAO's focus in recent years has been to assist in the resettlement of refugees and the internally displaced, as well as in aiding drought- and conflict-affected populations.

12. In 2006-7, funding for emergency and rehabilitation operations in Afghanistan exceeded US\$8 million. Specific activities have included support to drought-affected populations through the distribution of essential inputs, integrated pest management, and training and reintegration of ex-combatants. Major donors include Norway, Switzerland, UNDP and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

C. DJIBOUTI

13. In 2007, FAO assisted drought-affected populations through a CERF-funded project (US\$445 000) targeting the livestock sector. Djibouti is also a beneficiary of several regional programmes on drought mitigation and animal disease surveillance funded by the USA, Sweden and CERF.

D. EGYPT

14. In response to the avian influenza outbreaks in 2006 and 2007, FAO is supporting the government's efforts to control the animal disease. Nearly US\$1 million in funds from its Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities have been used to this effect. An additional US\$24 million has been approved by the United States (through USAID) to assist Egypt's animal and human disease control measures for the next three years. FAO is an implementing partner in this project.

E. IRAQ

15. FAO is the UN cluster coordinator for agriculture, food security, environment and natural resource management in Iraq. Through its operational country unit, re-located in Amman,

Jordan, FAO works in partnership with other UN agencies, providing support to the Iraqi government and also setting up activities with researchers, universities, agricultural extension workers and farmers.

16. FAO's Iraq activities thus far have received US\$95 million from the multi-donor Iraq Trust Fund (ITF). The focus areas of FAO's work are:

- rehabilitation of water supply systems, including irrigation and drainage infrastructure;
- restoration of livestock and veterinary services;
- promotion of employment generation through cottage industries and micro-enterprises such as dairy processing and beekeeping;
- restoration of food safety and food processing capacity;
- resumption of fish farming and the commercial fish industry;
- rehabilitation of the seed industry; and
- rehabilitation of the date palm sector.

F. JORDAN

17. FAO is assisting the Jordanian government in developing and implementing an effective avian influenza prevention and control programme. This assistance aims at strengthening the capacities of the veterinary services in Jordan to prevent and control avian influenza outbreaks, in order to prevent serious losses to poultry farmers and the rural economy and to safeguard human health. Main funding (US\$400 000) has been provided by Sweden with some support from other donors.

G. LEBANON

18. In July and August 2006, hostilities in southern Lebanon resulted in loss of life, destruction of infrastructure, disruption of essential services and displacement of people, particularly farming communities. All segments of the agriculture sector were devastated and the interruption in the care of crops and livestock led to enormous income/production losses, severely impacting farmers' livelihoods. To help alleviate the effects, FAO is implementing two projects within the framework of the Lebanese Recovery Fund (LRF) valued at US\$3.3 million. FAO's assistance will help war-affected farmers by introducing improved horticulture practices and providing improved seed varieties for fast recovery of vegetable crop production and revitalization of fruit and olive trees, along with irrigation and fertilizers to increase harvest yields.

19. The support will also improve the food security and the nutritional and economic status of low-income rural families by initiating comprehensive recovery measures to support war-affected livestock smallholders through restocking and distribution of animals such as cattle, goats, draft-animals and beehives. Thanks to funding from Sweden and other donors, FAO is also implementing activities to strengthen the capacities of the veterinary services in Lebanon to prevent and control avian influenza outbreaks. More than US\$200 000 has been provided to the country to cover the urgent needs of training, laboratory supplies and equipment.

H. PAKISTAN

20. Pakistan has been affected by two major emergencies during the past two years. A massive earthquake in northeast Pakistan in October 2005 caused severe damage, affecting the livelihoods of more than 4 million people and resulted in the loss of some 80 000 lives. During summer 2007, storms and a major cyclone caused severe flooding in the country, leading to the displacement of more than 300 000 people and affecting the livelihoods of more than 2.5 million. The southern provinces of Balochistan and Sindh were worst affected.

21. The majority of the population in the disaster-affected areas relies on agriculture and livestock production for livelihoods. The 2005 earthquake destroyed crops, damaged crop storage buildings and collapsed livestock shelters, leading to high mortality rates among livestock. A needs assessment in the aftermath of the flooding in 2007 confirmed the significant

damage suffered by the agriculture sector and the critical importance of crop production, livestock and fisheries to the food security and livelihoods of vulnerable households.

22. FAO reacted rapidly to the 2005 earthquake, working with the government to conduct a comprehensive damage and needs assessment. FAO established an Emergency Rehabilitation and Coordination Unit (ERCU) to coordinate its relief and recovery interventions. In collaboration with government agencies and other partners, the ERCU provided support to earthquake-affected households.

23. FAO has provided maize and wheat seeds and fertilizer to more than 200 000 vulnerable households. Some 3 000 households also have received materials and training to construct earthquake-resistant animal shelters and thousands of households have benefited from the distribution of animal feed. Major livelihood rehabilitation programmes in earthquake-affected areas, including improved access to rural support services and collaborative watershed management processes, will run through 2009.

24. Following the cyclone and subsequent flooding in 2007, FAO participated in a needs assessment of the flood-affected population and is implementing relief operations. FAO is providing agricultural inputs and technical assistance to restart agricultural activities, veterinary supplies to prevent further losses of livestock, fishing equipment to restart fishing activities and support for the repair and reconstruction of community-based, on-farm water management and water harvesting systems.

25. Current FAO emergency and rehabilitation operations total more than US\$17 million. Major donors include the Asian Development Bank, CERF, Sweden, UK and UNDP.

I. SOMALIA

26. Ravaged by years of war, Somalia has become one of the world's poorest and least developed countries with relatively few natural resources. Repeated shocks, both natural and human-induced, have left large parts of the population in need of humanitarian assistance. At the same time, more stable parts of the country are seeing recovery activities and the initial stages of a return to development.

27. The FAO Somalia Country Office is based in Nairobi, Kenya, as are most UN Somalia agencies. The Country Office is led by an FAO Officer-in-Charge who holds additional responsibility as the Senior Emergency Coordinator. This arrangement is a unique opportunity for the integration of the humanitarian, developmental and normative work of FAO. FAO is also the lead agency of the agriculture and livelihoods cluster, works in partnership with other UN agencies and international organizations and has an active role within the UN Country Team as well as the UN Transition Plan for 2008-09 which sets out the strategy of the UN in Somalia, supporting the transition from conflict to peace and from crisis to recovery and longer-term development.

28. FAO's portfolio of on-going projects in Somalia totals approximately US\$34 million, with pipeline projects totaling US\$15 million. Major donors include the European Commission (EC), Denmark, Italy, Norway, Sweden, UNDP, UNICEF and USA.

29. FAO's focus areas of work in Somalia are:

- information management projects – Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) and Somalia Water and Land Information Management (SWALIM);
- emergency interventions in support of rural population in the Central-South Region;
- livestock interventions focused on animal health surveillance and the meat sector;
- rehabilitation of irrigation schemes along the Juba and Shabelle rivers – Agricultural Rehabilitation and Diversification of High Potential Irrigation Schemes (ARDOPIS);
- establishment of a seed multiplication programme for indigenous and improved seeds; and

- private enterprise development, farmer assistance and capacity building for line ministries.

J. SUDAN

Northern Sudan and Darfur

30. Increasing conflict in Northern Sudan and Darfur has led to a humanitarian emergency caused by loss of key agricultural assets such as seeds, farming tools and livestock. This has severely affected the productive capacity of the human populations in these areas. Farmers still use low-yield, high-effort methods of farming which limit their food and livestock production.

31. FAO's emergency programme supports the sustainable reintegration of poor transient populations affected by conflict, voluntary returnees, refugees and resident communities returning to their original land throughout the Region. FAO is carrying out 25 projects in Northern Sudan and Darfur valued at nearly US\$30 million. The Common Fund for Humanitarian Action in Sudan provides funding for activities within the framework of the UN and Partners Workplan for Sudan 2007. Funding has also been provided by the EC, Denmark, France, Japan, Spain, Sweden and the USA.

32. FAO's projects provide assistance in agricultural development, livestock and natural resource protection. Farmers are also supported with appropriate farming inputs for crop and vegetable production, veterinary support services (training, vaccines, and veterinary drugs and equipment) and strengthening the immediate livestock disease outbreak response capacity. The organization also supports the restoration and rehabilitation of forestry and pasture areas and promotes fuel-efficient cooking.

Southern Sudan

33. Humanitarian activities in South Sudan focus on assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and vulnerable resident households (including people living with HIV/AIDS) by preserving and improving food security, in accordance with the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in the area. Activities also focus on improving the livelihoods of vulnerable populations such as host communities, small-scale farmers and local producer associations. In addition, FAO helps build partner capacities and promote a safe environment for sustainable agricultural development.

34. FAO's ongoing emergency programme for 2007 is valued at US\$9 million. The Common Fund for Humanitarian Action in Sudan provides funding for activities within the framework of the UN and Partners Workplan for Sudan. Direct funding has also been provided by the EC, France, Japan, Italy, CERF and USA.

Sudan: Institutional capacity-building programmes

35. Two large-scale institutional capacity-building programmes are being implemented in Sudan by FAO in parallel to ongoing emergency and rehabilitation programmes.

36. The Sudan Institutional Capacity Programme: Food Security Information for Action (SIFSIA), initiated in December 2006, is a four-year programme to strengthen human, physical and organizational capacities in the generation and utilization of information for the analysis, design, monitoring and evaluation of food security related policies and programmes. The value of the programme is €20.6 million (US\$29 million), of which approximately €20 million comes from the EC.

37. The capacity-building component of the Sudan Productive Capacity Recovery Programme (SPCRP), to be implemented by FAO, aims to strengthen the capacities of state government administrations and non-state actors (NSAs) operating within the agricultural sector. The value of this component is €38.1 million (US\$54 million), with the EC funding €37 million and an additional 3 percent co-financed by other sources. Implementation started in August 2007.

K. SYRIA

38. FAO has assisted the Government of Syria in developing and implementing an effective avian influenza prevention and control programme since 2005. This assistance focuses particularly on strengthening veterinary service capacity. Funding of US\$400 000 has been provided mostly by Sweden. In particular, the funds have been used to elaborate an effective contingency plan, train national veterinarians and provide laboratory supplies and equipment.

L. TAJIKISTAN

39. FAO's emergency and rehabilitation activities have evolved from direct emergency support activities undertaken during and immediately after Tajikistan's 1992-1997 civil war and, since 2005, have moved towards rehabilitation- and development-oriented projects. Projects include:

- animal health and animal production,
- community-based land and water resources development,
- pasture and livestock development,
- food security and land tenure, and
- crop production and marketing.

40. Current project volume is valued at US\$8.1 million. The main donors are the Asian Development Bank, Canada, EC, Sweden and the World Bank.

M. WEST BANK AND GAZA STRIP

41. FAO's involvement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip relates to the provision of a safety net for food-insecure farming households that can no longer rely on traditional livelihoods. Beneficiaries are predominantly low-income farmers whose limited access to agricultural inputs and water prevents them from diversifying their production.

42. FAO also plays a coordination role among the UN agencies, authorities and NGOs working to increase food security and serves as lead technical agency for animal health control and avian influenza prevention. The main donors to FAO's project portfolio in the West Bank and Gaza Strip include the EC, Norway, Japan, Italy, Spain and Sweden whose contributions have been more than US\$8 million.

43. Current project activities include support to horticulture, irrigation, and livestock health and production as well as income-generating activities such as olive oil and date palm production, backyard agricultural production and cottage industries. Food insecurity and vulnerability information systems have been developed. In addition, projects are being implemented to bolster the capacity to detect, confirm and respond to avian influenza.

N. YEMEN

44. In response to a desert locust outbreak in May-June 2007, FAO received more than US\$2.4 million from CERF to implement a control programme in Yemen. In addition, FAO is assisting the government in developing and implementing an effective avian influenza control and prevention programme, with support from Sweden (US\$285 000) and other donors (US\$80 000).

O. REGIONAL PROGRAMMES

45. FAO's Emergency and Rehabilitation Regional Programmes in the Near East focus on the control of transboundary pests and diseases, such as locust and avian influenza. Surplus funds from the massive desert locust campaign in West and Northwest Africa in 2004-5 are being used to test alternative and environmentally friendly control methods. In addition, assistance programmes for early detection and prevention of avian influenza in the Region are being established.

46. For example, Spain has provided US\$1.5 million to support avian influenza programmes in the Maghreb and Egypt. This will provide coordination support to North African countries to raise awareness and provide training and logistical support in the prevention, control and response to avian influenza or other transboundary animal disease outbreaks.

47. Additionally, FAO has allocated US\$800 000 from its own resources to implement regional activities related to preparedness, public awareness, migratory bird surveillance and early warning systems.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

48. In order to make the best use of available aid resources and ensure sustainable food security, it is recommended that recipient governments and the international community invest time and effort in:

- helping communities with preparedness in order to prevent or mitigate the risk of disasters, including raising donor awareness of the cost effectiveness of these preventive investments;
- improving national and regional commodity market monitoring and food security analysis to ensure that any response is needs based, targeted, strategic and timely, while also ensuring that the analysis is continuously updated and evaluated;
- strengthening institutional capacity and leadership at the international, national and regional levels to ensure that the wider dimensions of food security, including support for agricultural-based livelihoods, are considered in policy and programming; and
- ensuring that emergency interventions are complemented by other programmes and projects to improve the productive capacity of vulnerable households and regions and strengthen their resilience to shocks by developing the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors.

V. WAY FORWARD

49. The Independent External Evaluation of FAO was mandated by the 2005 FAO Conference to “chart the way forward” for FAO. The Conference welcomed the Report issued in September 2007 and indicated it will provide the basis for Members’ decision making on an integrated package of reforms for the Organization. The Conference further decided to develop an Immediate Plan of Action and Strategic Framework for FAO renewal after a systematic review of the IEE report and its findings and recommendations and the management response.

This review process will address the findings and recommendations made by the IEE for the Organization’s work in emergencies:

- FAO’s work in emergencies deserves a high priority. An overall strategy now needs to be formulated and approved in the Governing Bodies to elucidate and gain a clear mandate for those emergency functions in which FAO is strong. The strategy should be dynamic and subject to regular discussion also in the Governing Bodies.
- There should be clear concentration on large emergencies where FAO can act in partnership with others and maximize on its comparative advantages.
- Some increase in the Regular Programme resources allocated to maintain operational capacity in the Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division (TCE) is justified.
- Continuation of FAO’s capacity for plant pest emergency management (especially locusts) needs to be reinforced, while a stronger standing capacity is required for livestock diseases.
- The roles FAO assumes in emergencies (from resource mobilization to planning, coordination and delivery) need to be examined in order to assess their effectiveness and impact, while taking account of their full inter-dependence. Areas that require major improvements are operational procedures, contracting of human resources and the use of staff and consultants, prioritization on large emergencies, and information on beneficiaries targeting and the use made of FAO outputs.