

175th Session of the Council

Item 15: Status of implementation of decisions taken at the 174th Session of the Council (Rome, 4-8 December 2023)

The Secretariat thanks Members for the comments received.

With regard to the comments made by New Zealand, the Secretariat of the Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific (APRC) wishes to convey its deep appreciation to the Regional Groups of Permanent Representatives of Asia and the Southwest Pacific for their intense engagement and strong support throughout the preparation period and at the Regional Conference itself. This is evidenced by the participation of the Groups in as many as six briefing and discussion meetings (between April 2023 and January 2024) on the Conference documents, Senior Officers Meeting (SOM) and Ministerial Session, and the logistics.

During the preparatory process, the Groups were kept fully abreast of the changes in format of the APRC including among others, the separation of the SOM (virtual) and Ministerial meetings (in-person); the development of common agenda items; and the emphasis on interaction and knowledge sharing between countries. These changes in format were made in the last quarter of 2023. The APRC was the first full-fledged Regional Conference in this cycle to implement these changes and the timeframe leading up to the SOM (30 January to 2 February 2024) became unfortunately constricted. This led to delays in posting of Conference documents and their translations. Now that the new format is well established, the Secretariat will re-calibrate its workplan and milestones leading up to the 38th Session of APRC (APRC 38) to ensure that documents are posted on time. This will include a calendar of briefing sessions that will be shared with the Groups in advance. The Asia-Pacific region spans 11 time zones, and therefore, poses a logistical challenge in terms of timing of the sessions. The Secretariat (both in the past and at the 37th Session of APRC) continues to ensure that priority agenda items are taken up first, in the morning sessions which is early afternoon in the Pacific, so that the sub-region maximizes its participation. The contribution of Pacific countries in every session and panel discussion, whether live or by recorded video, is also consistently ensured. The FAO Subregional Office for the Pacific Islands in Apia, Samoa, will maintain its liaison and work with the 14 Pacific Members and one Observer to assure optimum internet access and reliable connectivity for the subsequent sessions.

With reference to the comment by the United States of America, the Secretariat wishes to highlight that FAO continues to strengthen its partnerships with UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) by leveraging UN Development System repositioning tools such as joint planning, programming, and country-level resource mobilization efforts, to foster synergies among UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and deliver effective and efficient support to Members in their development pathways. This collaboration with the Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) is critical to FAO's goal of mobilizing a whole-of-society support for transforming agrifood systems, fully aligned with national development priorities. Specifically, FAO Country Teams are supported and guided by the headquarters' UN Collaboration Unit to cooperate with RCs across the five pillars of the Management and Accountability Framework (MAF):

RC Strategic Leadership: FAO leverages on the strong leadership of Resident Coordinators in advancing agrifood systems transformation, promoting various multi-stakeholder partnerships and national dialogue platforms, with recent data indicating that 83 percent of programme countries' governments find UN support efficient in their quest to transform their food systems (2024 DESA Survey).

Integrated Policy and Programming: FAO will further enhance its headquarters-based and regional mechanisms to leverage its technical, policy, investment capacity as well as data and analysis, supporting engagement at critical stages of the CCA and UNSDCF processes, positioning itself as the leading UN agency in agrifood systems transformation. FAO is collaborating with DCO, in developing a dedicated tool to support RCs and UNCTs on integrating food systems in UN policy and programmatic frameworks.

By the end of 2023, FAO Country Offices participated in the negotiation and formulation of 128 UNSDCFs, followed by the endorsement of 98 CPFs. FAO has further increased its engagement and participation across various UNCT Results and Functional Groups, with a notable rise in the number of FAO Country Offices (co-)leading these groups, including Programme Management Teams (PMTs) in 2023.

Joint Fundraising Coordination: The RCs' convening power and impartiality were perceived by FAO Country Offices as crucial for resource mobilization and advocacy, supporting FAO's efforts through country-level multi-partner trust funds and platforms like CERF and the Joint SDG Fund. These also helped to reduce inter-agency competition through coordinated fundraising, with FAO steadily increasing its participation in UN Multi-Partner Trust Funds (MPTFs), more notably in UN-REDD, the Peacebuilding Fund, UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration Trust Fund, and the Afghanistan Special Trust Fund. These flexible funding modalities, in particular, the repositioned Joint SDG Fund and its new "food systems" window, launched earlier this year, represents a unique opportunity for RCs to draw on FAO's technical leadership as well as specialized UN expertise from across the system, to provide tailored support to countries in advancing agrifood systems transformation, and leveraging catalytic funding and investments. Since early 2024, a dedicated cross-divisional task team at headquarters provides tailored support to FAO Country Offices in designing joint proposals under RC leadership across various thematic windows of the Joint SDG Fund, including food systems, digital transformation, social protection and SDG localization.

Improving UN Efficiencies: RC-led UN efficiency agenda at the country level continues to yield return on investment, with FAO contributing to system-wide initiatives like Joint Procurement, UN fleet and UN Booking Hub, and engaging in UN efficiency initiatives, such as Business Operations Strategies, as part of Operations Management Teams and UNCTs.

Advocacy and Communication: FAO will continue to actively participating in UNCT communication groups, and engage RCs in supporting both FAO's and joint RBA's advocacy and outreach campaigns in strategically positioning agrifood systems, food security and nutrition among the national development priorities. This includes emphasizing the socio-economic benefits of sustainable agriculture, showcasing FAO's impactful projects, and aligning FAO's goals with broader national development goals, enabling FAO to garner increased resources and support for its initiatives.

In food crisis contexts, as FAO and in its position as cluster lead agency, the Organization provides consistent support to Resident Coordinators, within the Humanitarian Country Team, including the provision of data on food security (frequently through leadership of the IPC process), emerging threats, and priorities for the agriculture sector and livelihoods. Leveraging its role within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on the issue of climate change, the Organization is working with a number of Resident Coordinators to finalize and pilot the roadmap on climate action in humanitarian contexts – an IASC initiative to support Resident Coordinators in ensuring adequate attention to climate change impacts in the midst of humanitarian crises.

A more in-depth update on the progress in strengthening FAO's relationship with UNRCs will be provided in the next UN collaboration progress report to FAO Governing Bodies at the end of 2024.

With regard to the comment of New Zealand, the Secretariat wishes to clarify that in line with the report to the 175th Session of the Council, an update on the Office of Youth and Women (OYW) workplan and related results framework will be provided at the end of 2024.

FAO wishes to thank Japan for the appreciation expressed to the Organization's work and products related to the war in Ukraine. FAO has intensified its monitoring and analytical work following the outbreak of the war in late February 2022, with the objective to improve transparency, reduce uncertainty in global markets, and inform and guide policy decisions and interventions. The work programme of the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) has been expanded to cover global vegetable oil and

fertilizer markets in this context. FAO wishes to express its thanks and gratitude to the Government of Japan for the financial support provided to AMIS. Regarding the comments on paragraphs 8 and 9 of document CL 175/LIM/3, FAO will continue to work with relevant UN and government stakeholders to develop joint analyses and assessments to understand the impact of the war on food security, agricultural livelihoods and production, and to monitor the impact on the global food security situation. FAO appreciates the comments made by the United States of America regarding the work of the Organization in providing information and analysing the impact of the war in Ukraine on global food security. FAO is committed to continuing this work, as part of its core activities, including in collaboration with other international organizations and in the context of the partnership under AMIS. FAO is currently working and will continue to work closely with UN partners, in particular the World Food Programme (WFP), on the co-production of joint analyses and assessments, with a particular focus on the impact of the war on Ukraine's food security and agricultural livelihoods outcomes, as well as related webinars and events to disseminate findings and recommendations resulting from the joint analytical production.

In responses to Japan's comments on paragraphs 6 and 7 of document CL 175/LIM/3, the Secretariat wishes to inform that FAO will continue to monitor the acute food insecurity situation in the Gaza Strip, including through upcoming Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analyses in 2024. The projects that FAO was implementing before the hostilities have suspended their delivery and interventions may need to be redesigned in consultation with the respective resource partners to adapt to the changing priority needs and the volatile operational environment with a focus on early recovery and rehabilitation. With regard to the comments made by the United States of America, to date, FAO managed to deliver 383 tonnes of barely fodder to beneficiaries inside Gaza, and at present has 117 tonnes of fodder in Cairo awaiting to be shipped through Kerem Shalom as soon as security conditions inside Gaza allow to pick up the shipment from Kerem Shalom and distribute inside Gaza. FAO has an additional 500 tonnes of fodder under procurement in Egypt to be shipped at a later stage through the Egyptian route as soon as possible. FAO has further 500 tonnes of fodder being procured from suppliers inside Gaza, using the opportunity created in the latest weeks by the Israeli authorities agreeing to private importers delivering inside Gaza, most likely originating from Israel and/or West Bank. Other goods in the pipeline are not expected to be shipped before one month and shipment will take place depending on security/logistic conditions at that time. These procurements include delivery by suppliers directly inside Gaza.

FAO appreciates the feedback of the Government of Canada and the United Kingdom. Under paragraph 10 of document CL 175/LIM/3, on the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Initiative Dashboard the work is indeed ongoing to upgrade and improve the HIH Dashboard and was inadvertently marked as "completed" rather than the correct indication of "ongoing" in the Council documentation. The number of countries who joined HIH continues to increase and the HIH team is working on enhanced automation of data collection and monitoring. An improved version of the Dashboard is therefore being prepared and is a work in progress.

With reference to the comments by New Zealand, United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia, an update on the preparation of the business plan and roadmap on efficiency gains and savings will be provided to the Fall 2024 session of the Finance Committee and Council. The Programme of Work and Budget 2026-27 will also include a section on efficiency gains and savings.

The Secretariat takes due note of the comments by Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom on the scope of the document, and will continue to seek pathways to enhancing its reporting value to Members.