

**THIRD PLANNING MEETING FOR THE THIRD ANNUAL JOINT INFORMAL
MEETING OF THE ROME-BASED AGENCY GOVERNING BODIES**

Aula I, Aula Delegatis – WFP Headquarters

8 July 2019

10:00–11:30

Note for the record

The third planning meeting for the third annual joint informal meeting of the governing bodies of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) (collectively, the “Rome-based agencies”) took place at 10:00 on 8 July 2019 at WFP headquarters in Rome.

The meeting was chaired by the President of the WFP Executive Board and attended by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council and the Chairperson of the IFAD Executive Board, along with FAO Regional Group chairs and co-chairs, IFAD convenors and co/vice-convenors and WFP Bureau convenors and alternate convenors. A list of participants is set out in the annex to this note.

The meeting was called to order by the President of the WFP Board, H.E. Hisham Mohamed Badr (Egypt), who said that his objective was to review the current draft of the concept note on the conduct of the third joint informal meeting of the Rome-based agency governing bodies, to take place at WFP headquarters on 13 September 2019. The concept note had been updated on 4 July, based on feedback received via an e-consultation, and was re-distributed to all participants.

The WFP Board President welcomed all participants, particularly Mr Gilbert Houngbo, in his dual capacity as the Chairperson of the Executive Board of IFAD and IFAD President, and Mr Khalid Mehboob, the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council. He also noted the presence of management representatives from the three Rome-based agencies, who were attending in a consultative capacity.

The WFP Board President recognized that due to the very busy calendar of the Rome-based agencies, the meeting was rather overdue, but he expressed confidence that it would be a positive and successful step towards finalizing the arrangements for the September meeting.

1. Adoption of the agenda

The participants adopted the provisional agenda as circulated in advance of the meeting, noting that the WFP Executive Board Secretary would raise certain logistics issues under “Any other business”.

2. Review of the draft concept note and agenda for the third annual informal meeting

Before turning to the concept note, the WFP Board President gave a brief update on the status of the invitation sent to the United Nations Secretary-General to address the third joint informal meeting. In accordance with what had been agreed at the first planning meeting, a letter inviting the Secretary-General to address the governing bodies of FAO, IFAD and WFP had been sent on 31 January 2019. To date, no response had been received to that letter. However, on 6 March the Executive Office of the Secretary-General had responded to a separate letter the WFP Board President had sent on 25 February, announcing his election as Board President and stating that he was looking forward to the Secretary-General's participation at two upcoming meetings he would be chairing: the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP (JMB) on 31 May in New York and the third annual joint RBA governing bodies meeting. In their reply, the Executive Office of the Secretary-General noted that the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms Amina J. Mohammed would represent the Secretary-General at the JMB. The WFP Board President reported that he had held a bilateral with Ms Mohammed on the margins



of the JMB, during which he had reiterated the valuable perspective that the Executive Office of the Secretary-General would bring to discussions at the third annual joint informal meeting of the governing bodies of the Rome-based agencies, particularly regarding the United Nations reform and achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2 on zero hunger. The Deputy Secretary-General had responded favourably, pledging to do her best to adjust her schedule in order to attend – even to the point that she had requested flexibility in the 13 September meeting agenda in order to speak later in the day. On 28 June, the WFP President had sent a letter as a follow up to the JMB, in which he also reminded the Secretary-General of the invitation to the September meeting. As yet, no response had been received to this most recent letter.

Moving to the concept note, the WFP Board President emphasized that the purpose of the meeting was to finalize the draft and decide upon the topics to be discussed at the joint informal meeting in September. He encouraged all participants to convey the points of their respective constituencies and welcomed any input on how to ensure the joint meeting was interactive.

In his preliminary remarks, the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council, Mr Mehboob, emphasized two issues of particular importance for the September meeting: collaboration over the medical insurance scheme of the three Rome-based agencies; and the compatibility of their enterprise resource planning (ERP) platforms. For the former, it was unclear whether management representatives of the respective agencies had explored the possibility of using a common umbrella contract or whether WFP had proceeded to secure its own medical insurance without consulting the other two agencies. Regarding system compatibility, the Chairperson noted that the issue was long outstanding: The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had criticized the incompatibility of the systems of the three agencies as far back as a decade ago. The Chairperson observed that compatible systems would deliver clear cost efficiencies not only for the organizations but for Member States.

Mr Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director of WFP, responded to the first point on medical insurance, stating that, although the information provided from FAO and IFAD indicated that there were no discussions between management on this matter, he believed discussions between management representatives of the three agencies had taken place regarding a tender. He promised to report back to participants to confirm whether this was indeed the case.¹

The WFP Board President noted the importance of ascertaining the current state of progress on both issues, reiterating the value added this type of collaboration would have for the organizations. He added that it would be good to give the Membership news of progress in these areas in September, or at least an indication of when progress would be made.

Before opening the floor to the Member States, the WFP Board President reminded participants that it would be productive to limit the September discussions to three or four topics maximum, rather than seeking to cover too many topics in a Christmas tree-like fashion without having the opportunity to explore any of them fully. He observed that there was apparent consensus around the topic of United Nations reform and its impact on the Rome-based agencies, reiterating what he had said in the WFP Executive Board Annual Session in mid-June and at the JMB that the train had left the station as reform was underway. He also commended Mr Abdulla for his good work in continuing to keep the WFP Bureau informed on progress in this area for WFP. As a second topic, the collaboration of the agencies in the

¹ Subsequent to the meeting, the Deputy Executive Director of WFP asked that the following contacts summary be included in a footnote to the note for record as a response to the discussion point: Since 18 February 2019, management representatives have held: i) Four JAC/MC (Joint Advisory Committee on Medical Coverage) meetings including with the Rome-based agencies Staff Associations; ii) One exchange of letters between the Director-General of FAO and the Executive Director of WFP, the latter confirming the will to withdraw to better control and tailor medical support to 17,000 WFP staff in the 81 countries where it operates to WFP actual risks; iii) One session with the Former FAO and Other United Nations Agency (FFOA) Staff Association General Assembly; and iv) One meeting with FAO and WFP Chiefs of Staff and Directors of Human Resources.



Sahel region was a proposal that had garnered much support. With this in mind, he encouraged participants to focus on proposals for the third topic, such as a suggestion from the African Group to examine issues related to youth and women in food security and agriculture. The WFP Board President added that media coverage of the September meeting would be encouraged; to this end, a guest speaker such as a goodwill ambassador for one of the agencies could be useful addition to the agenda to galvanize the work of the agencies.

Participants:

- concurred on the need to focus on two-to-three topics in order to make the meeting more useful and concrete;
- underscored the importance of taking full advantage of the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General to discuss the implications of United Nations reform in depth. To this end, several participants recommended separating the issue of United Nations reform from topics such as climate change and food security and limiting the number of questions to be addressed in this segment to focus discussions more effectively, as outlined in the updated concept note of 4 July;
- recognized that although the 2018 joint informal meeting had discussed the Sahel, it was important for Member States to see the first concrete example of Rome-based agencies collaboration at the field level under the context of the memorandum of understanding signed last year, particularly given the deterioration in the region over the past year; the topic could also be linked to broader discussions on resilience building and security, if so wished, to be applied to other regions where the three agencies collaborated closely;
- called for a broader discussion on how collaboration between the Rome-based agencies could be improved, including at the field level and considering the findings of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network study;
- expressed interest in discussing the private sector strategies and approaches of the three agencies to explore how the private sector could contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly as both IFAD and WFP had strategies under development and this topic would also tie in with the priorities of the incoming Director-General of FAO;
- noted the value of examining issues related to the United Nations Security Council and the role of the Rome-based agencies, particularly regarding how the agencies were perceived in New York;
- requested a progress report from the Principals on the joint implementation plan, to be provided in advance of the joint informal meeting in order to allow Member States to prepare appropriately;
- suggested inviting a Resident Coordinator to the joint meeting in order to hear from someone at the heart of the implementation of United Nations reform;
- requested an update on progress towards a joint action plan for the Sahel, for which a document should also be provided in advance of the meeting.;
- requested that the annual report on the collaboration between the Rome-based agencies be provided before the September meeting and if this was not possible, at least well ahead of the meeting of the FAO Council in December; in relation to this point, participants noted that at the September meeting, it would be logical to limit discussion of issues that would be brought before the respective Boards later in the year;
- noted the need to balance the agenda of the joint meeting in terms of topics relevant to headquarters and those pertinent to the field, as well as cross-cutting topics such as gender;
- called for an update on the June 2018 memorandum of understanding between the three agencies; and
- urged the secretariats to provide information in a timely and effective way, as some lists appeared to receive information ahead of others: for example, the WFP and IFAD bureaux or equivalent representatives had received information at the same time while the regional group representatives of FAO had received information with some delay.



Mr Hounbo, IFAD President, reminded participants that many Member States had been frustrated by the lack of opportunity to take the floor at the first and second joint informal meetings. It was therefore vital to ensure that the agenda was manageable. He therefore proposed organizing discussions into three blocks:

1. United Nations reform.
2. The Sahel: this block would include an update on progress since the 2018 joint meeting, a report on the current situation and input on aspects such as security, which were of paramount importance for operations in the region.
3. Management services: this would encompass a review of the ERP systems with a view to making them compatible and health insurance, as well as approaches to private sector relations.

The IFAD President suggested that these three blocks would offer sufficient content to fill the one-day meeting. He supported the suggestion of inviting a Resident Coordinator to attend, observing that someone who held the post in the Sahel region would be ideal. He requested that WFP come back to the participants with a proposal in this regard.

The Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council supported the comments made by the IFAD President, emphasizing that the “management services” block could address the topics he had highlighted at the start of the meeting, namely medical insurance and the harmonization of the administrative systems of the three agencies.

The Deputy Executive Director of WFP also welcomed the proposals to structure the joint meeting around the three blocks and to invite a Resident Coordinator from the Sahel region. He noted that the Deputy Secretary-General herself had played a role in the development of the integrated strategy for the Sahel, suggesting that she could also make an insightful contribution to the second block of the joint meeting.

The IFAD President informed participants that there was no joint Rome-based agency strategy for the Sahel in place yet; in September, Member States would have the opportunity to understand the progress that had been made by the three agencies, adding that the joint strategy should thus be a deliverable of the Joint Informal Meeting. He also remarked that the situation in the Sahel had deteriorated significantly in the past year, complicating development and humanitarian work still further, as affirmed in a recent meeting he attended with the G5 Sahel in Paris. He added the Sahel would be the subject of the G7 meeting to be convened by France at the end of August so the discussion would be timely for the 13 September meeting.

Bringing discussions to a close, the WFP Board President reminded participants that this was the first time that Member States and management were working together to prepare the joint informal meeting – an example of fruitful collaboration in and of itself, and characteristic of the spirit of all three Rome-based agencies. He praised the level of consensus reached around the discussions on the first two topics for the joint informal meeting.

Regarding United Nations reform, he highlighted the importance of reinforcing the message delivered at the JMB regarding the working methods adhered to in Rome; the attendance of the Deputy Secretary-General would be an opportunity not only to bring a message from New York but also to deliver a message from the Rome agencies on how they were operating, in order to safeguard this approach in the future.



The WFP Board President was concerned to learn that there was not yet a joint strategy in place for the Sahel, and he suggested that one recommendation from the planning meeting could be to ensure the strategy was in a form suitable for discussion by September. More broadly, he noted the potential to include issues of interest such as resilience building and field-level operations in the segment on the Sahel.

For the content to be addressed under management services, the WFP Board President sought to distinguish between requests for more information and the desire to discuss issues. He also noted the importance of presenting concrete success stories related to collaboration between the Rome-based agencies. With technical matters such as the alignment of IT platforms and other administrative infrastructure, he suggested that the request from Members might be better met by a report submitted for information, rather than by allocating discussion time. He proposed dividing the subitems in this way, and he invited participants to express their views on which matters should be for information only.

The Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council emphasized the need to ensure that the joint informal meeting resulted in action, rather than just speeches. He reiterated the large potential savings that could be achieved if the three agencies were to render their systems compatible, noting that even though this observation had been made many times in different fora over the years, no action had been forthcoming. He also saw that the Membership was keen to have concrete information on how the agencies were collaborating, rather than statements of intent. The Chairperson called for all three agencies to carry out a review to understand how their systems could be compatible and how much it would cost; a report on this topic without discussion time would therefore suffice, as action would be taken in the form of the review.

The IFAD President agreed, noting that if the issue was added to the agenda for the joint informal meeting, management would need to produce a document that could then be reviewed by the Membership. To address the need to showcase success stories, the IFAD President suggested that a short video of 15 to 20 minutes could be produced and shown at the opening of the meeting, in place of the field visit video shown at the previous joint meetings. Returning to the question of system compatibility, the IFAD President remarked that the issue revolved around ERP; Members could therefore have a fruitful exchange of ideas on the issue without entering into technical details. There was also a direct link with United Nations reform efforts.

To summarize, the WFP Board President ran through the revised agenda for the third joint informal meeting:

- Speech by high profile guest, such as a goodwill ambassador of one of the agencies
- Short video showing success stories founded on collaboration between the Rome-based agencies
- Topic 1: United Nations reform
- Topic 2: The Sahel
- Topic 3: Management services
 - A review of the ERP systems, including cost-saving measures, with a view to making them compatible
 - Private sector strategy coherence
 - For information: Status report to be distributed for information on the collaboration taking place in the administrative and financial fields between the three Rome-based agencies to assess further areas for collaboration and cost savings

3. Any other business: next steps and date of the next preparatory meeting

In response to concerns raised by one participant regarding the participation of Members and Observers, the WFP Board Secretary shared details of the seating capacity of the WFP auditorium, where the third joint informal meeting would take place. The auditorium could seat up to 120 Member States with a “one plus one” system; this was necessary in order to comply with fire regulations. The event would also be retransmitted to various screens in the Aula Delegatis, which would be opened up as an overflow area. Copies of the layout of the auditorium were distributed to all participants for information.

She advised that a note for the record would be produced for the planning meeting and circulated to all participants. Based on the response to the document, WFP would gauge the need for an additional planning meeting after the holiday period. In any case, further feedback could be gathered through an e-consultation.



ANNEX - List of participants

WFP

- **List A – Egypt:** H.E. Hisham Mohamed Badr, WFP President of the Executive Board
 - Supported by Mr Haitham Abdelhady Elsayed Elshahat, First Secretary (as observer)
- **List B – Kuwait:** Dr Jeehan Alestad, Alternate Permanent Representative (Representing Mr Youssef Juhail, List B Convenor)
- **List C – Brazil:** Mr Luís Fernando de Carvalho, Deputy Permanent Representative (Alternate)
- **List D – Germany:** Mr Ramón Lohmar, Alternate Permanent Representative (Representing H.E. Dr Ulrich Seidenberger, List D Convenor)
 - Supported by Ms Isabell Ladiges, Second Secretary (as observer)
- Mr Amir Abdulla, Deputy Executive Director
- Ms Harriet Spanos, Secretary to the Executive Board and Director, Executive Board Secretariat

FAO

- Mr Khalid Mehboob, FAO Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council
- **Africa – Nigeria:** Mr Yaya Adisa Olaitan Olaniran, Permanent Representative (Chairperson)
- **Africa – Morocco:** Ms Houda Ayouch, Chargée d'affaires and Deputy Permanent Representative (vice-Chairperson)
- **Asia – Viet Nam:** Mr Duc Thanh NGUYEN, Minister Counsellor and Alternate Permanent Representative (Representing H.E. Nguyen Thi Bich Hue, Asia regional group Chairperson)
- **Europe – Malta:** Mr Clint Borg, Alternate Permanent Representative (Representing Mr Adam Kuymizakis, Europe regional group Chairperson)
- **European Union – European Union:** Ms Renate Hahlen, Deputy Permanent Representative (Representing H.E. Jan Tombinski, European Union regional group co-Chairperson)
- **North America – Canada:** Mr David Cuming, Alternate Permanent Representative (Representing Ms Mi Nguyen, North America regional group co-Chairperson)
- Mr Rakesh Muthoo, Director, Conference, Council and Protocol Affairs

IFAD

- Mr Gilbert F. Hounghbo, IFAD Chairperson of the Executive Board
- **List A – Finland:** Ms Satu Lassila, Permanent Representative (Convenor, also representing FAO European Union group as Chairperson)
- **List B – Venezuela:** Mr Porfirio Pestana de Barros, Alternate Permanent Representative (Vice-Convenor)
- **List C1 – Angola:** Mr Carlos Alberto Amaral, Deputy Permanent Representative (Convenor)
- **List C/C2 – China:** Ms Han Dongmei, Alternate Permanent Representative (Representing Mr Shi Jiaoqun, List C and Sub-List C2 Convenor)
 - Supported by Mr LI He, Second Secretary, and Ms LI Xi, Official of Section of WFP affairs (as observers)
- **List C3 – México:** Mr Benito Santiago Jiménez Sauma, Alternate Permanent Representative (Convenor)
- Ms Charlotte Salford, Associate Vice-President, External Relations and Governance Department
- Ms Atsuko Hirose, Secretary of IFAD
- Mr Ronald Hartman, Director, Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization



OTHER STAFF

- Ms Fiona Rainey, Conference Officer, FAO Conference, Council and Government Relations Branch
- Ms Stefania Lenoci, Special Assistant to the Chairperson of the IFAD Executive Board
- Mr Shantanu Mathur, Lead Adviser to the Associate Vice-President of IFAD

