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Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Matrix of recommendations regarding the efficiency of IFAD governing bodies

Note to Evaluation Committee members

Focal points:

Technical questions:

Cheryl Morden

Officer in Charge, Office of the Secretary
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2254
e-mail: c.morden@ifad.org

Ashwani Muthoo

Acting Director
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2053
e-mail: a.muthoo@ifad.org

Dispatch of documentation:

Deirdre McGrenra

Head, Governing Bodies Office
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2374
e-mail: gb_office@ifad.org

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For: Information

Matrix of recommendations regarding the efficiency of IFAD governing bodies

Background

1. The Executive Board reviewed the Corporate-level evaluation of IFAD's institutional efficiency and efficiency of IFAD-funded operations (CLEE) at its 108th session in April 2013. Among the recommendations contained therein, were recommendations regarding the efficiency of IFAD's governing bodies. During that Board session, there was engaged discussion on the governance-related recommendations and the Board looked forward to the outcome of the review of these matters by the Evaluation Committee at its September 2013 session.
2. The Evaluation Committee undertook this review at its seventy-seventh session, and concluded that a range of fundamental issues had been raised by the corporate-level evaluation with respect to IFAD's governing bodies. Furthermore, a mechanism needed to be identified to ensure that these issues were appropriately followed up with a view to bringing recommendations to the Board for a decision on the way forward.
3. In this respect, the Secretariat has compiled the present document, which summarizes the recommendations relative to IFAD's governing bodies, so as to facilitate discussion thereon with Convenors and Friends, the Evaluation Committee and the Executive Board, as appropriate.

Findings of the CLEE

4. Provided below are excerpts from the CLEE pertinent to the findings and resulting recommendations for improving the efficiency of IFAD's governing bodies. Table 1 presents the recommendations relating to the various governing bodies, together with the outcomes of deliberations to date at the Executive Board and Evaluation Committee.

Paragraph 133(x)

“There is scope for further efficiency gains in the IFAD Governing Bodies. In general, IFAD's governing bodies architecture is effective, and recent measures approved by the Board are on track to cut costs and enhance efficiency. The Governing Council provides a useful platform for discussion on contemporary agricultural issues, though the balance between governance and discussion of agricultural issues needs reflection. Keeping in mind the objective to further reduce costs and overall organizational effectiveness, the need to hold the Governing Council every year is questionable. The Board is generally well supported by its subsidiary bodies, but the Board's agenda is crowded and not sufficiently focused on discussing policies, results, lessons and evaluations. The lack of a code of conduct for Board members exposes the organization to reputational risks and needs attention. There are opportunities to achieve further efficiency gains in the functioning of the Board, while ensuring it satisfactorily fulfils its critical oversight and policy and strategy formulation role.”

Paragraph 142

“Recommendation 6: Focus oversight by Governing Bodies on key strategic issues. The Governing Council should consider delegating approval of IFAD’s administrative budget, including that of IOE, to the Board, and not holding its meetings annually. The Board could lighten its agenda by delegating approval of all loans and grants to the President, which would enable it to devote more attention to discussing policies and strategies, results, lessons and evaluations. To confirm the integrity of IFAD’s governance framework, a code of conduct for the Board should be introduced, in line with the other IFIs. Broad terms of reference for Board members should also be developed, to assist Member States in designating their Board representatives to IFAD. The Audit Committee should consider attracting outside professional expertise for major items on the agenda regarding financial oversight, controls and risks.”

Appendix I, section V. Governing Bodies

Key points

- The overall architecture of the Governing Bodies, though complex, works.
- The Governing Council is an important platform allowing Member States to interact. The format of the Council has evolved over the years to include discussions on thematic issues of interest, which is appreciated. This however is reducing space for addressing governance-related matters.
- Given the nature and function of the Governing Council, and as a means to reduce institutional direct and indirect costs, the possibility of holding the Governing Council less frequently merits consideration. This will however require IFAD Governors to delegate their authority in key areas to the Board (e.g. approval of the annual administrative budget).
- The Replenishment Consultations have traditionally been the platform where major policy and strategic decisions and direction are determined. The appointment of an independent chair for IFAD9 improved efficiency of the process. The conduct of the first midterm review (of IFAD8) provided a sound basis for discussions in IFAD9.
- The non-resident nature and heterogeneity of members are positive characteristics of IFAD’s Executive Board. The Board agendas are generally crowded, with too much discussion on items related to process and inputs, and less on strategy, policy, results, lessons and evaluations. The Board could reduce overload by utilizing opportunities for delegation.
- The absence of a code of conduct for Board members might compromise the integrity of its strategic and oversight role. The lack of broad guidelines for the required qualifications and overall profile of Board members also constrains efficiency and effectiveness.
- The role of the existing advisory committees, the EC and the AC, is essential for the Board’s preparation; AC effectiveness could be further enhanced by inviting an outside adviser to its meetings. The open debate between IOE and IFAD Management in the EC is important to enable members to better understand key issues and lessons of priority to the organization. The reports by the chairpersons to the Board do not sufficiently identify recommendations and unresolved issues.
- The independence of IOE and its sharper mandate (pursuant to the approval of the revised Evaluation Policy in 2011) set the stage for an improved learning performance by IFAD, which is a condition for achieving quality improvement and scaling-up.
- The List Conveners and Friends mechanism is useful to promote constant dialogue between Member States and IFAD Management. However, its informal character might be limiting efficiency and flow of information and communication across all members.
- There are efficiency implications for dividing IFAD Member States into three Lists (A, B and C), in line with the Agreement Establishing IFAD. The relevance of the List system in today’s context deserves discussion in the future, taking into account the evolution in profile of IFAD Member States in the last 35 years.

CLEE Governance Recommendations Matrix

Governing body	Recommendations and actions	CLEE reference	Deliberations at EB108 (April 2013) and EC77 (June 2013), ¹ as relevant for each issue
Governing Council	Reconsider frequency of GC sessions	Paragraph 108: "However, the evaluation raises the question whether it is essential to hold the Governing Council on an annual basis. Holding the Governing Council less frequently (e.g. every two years) would save further resources and would only require Governors to delegate authority to the Board of some recurrent functions (e.g. approval of the Fund's annual administrative budget)."	<p>EC 77 minutes: "Governing Council sessions. Diverse views were expressed regarding the frequency of sessions, i.e. whether they should be held annually or biennially. Some members proposed that, at least in years in which a Consultation on the Replenishment of IFAD's Resources was being held, the Governing Council could be foregone. Management reiterated its view that annual Governing Council sessions were important as they provided a unique opportunity for all Member States to interact with Management and with each other, and an occasion to advocate for smallholders and ensure their place on the international agenda. There was broad support for the need to conduct a study on the role, objectives and value-added of Governing Council sessions. This study would analyse the advantages and disadvantages – also in terms of cost-effectiveness – of retaining the current scheduling pattern and of altering the frequency of the session, and consider how to render the Council more strategic. It was recalled that this issue was scheduled for consideration by Convenors and Friends."</p> <p>EB108 minutes: "Divergent views were expressed with regard to, inter alia:</p>

¹ Minutes of EC77 presented in draft, as they are pending approval at the seventy-eighth session of the Evaluation Committee.

Governing body	Recommendations and actions	CLEE reference	Deliberations at EB108 (April 2013) and EC77 (June 2013), ¹ as relevant for each issue
			<p>– Frequency of Governing Council meetings, which may be taken up by Convenors and Friends; ... Members highlighted that, in their view, the Governing Council should continue to be held on a yearly basis.”</p> <p><i>Note: Given the divergence of views on this topic, this issue is scheduled for consideration at the September meeting of Convenors and Friends.</i></p>
	Review of format – balance between governance and discussion of agricultural issues	Paragraph 107: “The format of the Governing Council has evolved over the years, with more attention and space to the organization of panel discussions and side events on key topics related to global agriculture and rural development. This has been appreciated by many Member States, but has reduced time for governance issues and related business items.”	<p>EC77 minutes: “There was broad support for the need to conduct a study on the role, objectives and value-added of Governing Council sessions. This study would analyse the advantages and disadvantages – also in terms of cost-effectiveness – of retaining the current scheduling pattern and of altering the frequency of the session, and consider how to render the Council more strategic. It was recalled that this issue was scheduled for consideration by Convenors and Friends.”</p> <p><i>Note: This issue is scheduled for consideration at the September meeting of Convenors and Friends.</i></p>
	Delegation of authority to the Board of some recurrent functions (including approval of the administrative budget)	<p>Paragraph 108: “Holding the Governing Council less frequently (e.g. every two years) would save further resources and would only require Governors to delegate authority to the Board of some recurrent functions (e.g. approval of the Fund’s annual administrative budget).”</p> <p>Appendix I, paragraph 167. “A majority of respondents to the survey of Executive Board members agreed or partially agreed that the above-mentioned approval of the annual budget could be delegated to the Board”</p>	EB108 minutes: “Divergent views were expressed with regard to, inter alia: ... Delegation of authority for approval of the Fund’s administrative budget to the Executive Board.”

Governing body	Recommendations and actions	CLEE reference	Deliberations at EB108 (April 2013) and EC77 (June 2013), ¹ as relevant for each issue
Executive Board	Review of Board agendas to focus on results, policy, strategy, evaluation and lessons learned	<p>Paragraph 112: "Meetings are carefully structured and current chairmanship is strong. However, the evaluation finds that the Board agendas are overambitious, and there is relatively little space for discussion on results, policy and strategy, evaluation and lessons learned, as compared to the amount of discussion on process- and input-oriented documents. The IEE came to a similar conclusion and recommended a shift in balance towards the former type of topics."</p> <p>Appendix I, paragraph 170. "The low frequency of Board meetings has helped to keep them focused. ...However the fact remains that there is relatively little space for discussion on results, policy and strategy, evaluation and lessons learned, as compared to the amount of discussion on process- and input-oriented documents. The need to concentrate on major issues in the scarce time available should give the Board pause for thought."</p>	<p>EB108 minutes: "The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela requested that the minutes of the Board session reflect her country's disagreement with limiting the oversight of the governing bodies to mainly strategic issues, as proposed under recommendation 6 of the CLE. She expressed her support for Management's response to the CLE in this respect."</p> <p>EC77 minutes: "Effectiveness of Executive Board sessions. "the Committee expressed a common desire to explore ways to render Board sessions more effective and strategic. One member commented on the potential value of conducting a survey among IFAD staff to ascertain their views on the role of the Executive Board; another suggested the possibility of convening a working group to consider possible areas for efficiency gains. A suggestion was also made by one member that an extra session be added to the Board's annual calendar to ensure that issues were considered in sufficient depth. Members underlined the importance of receiving Board documents in a timely manner, so as to facilitate thorough review by capitals. Furthermore, an Executive Board retreat with the President, Management and IOE would provide an opportunity for deeper self-reflection on the role and performance of the Board. Questions were raised with regard to the advisability of the President serving also as Chairperson of the Board."</p>

Governing body	Recommendations and actions	CLEE reference	Deliberations at EB108 (April 2013) and EC77 (June 2013), ¹ as relevant for each issue
	<p>Delegate authority to the President to approve new loans and grants</p>	<p>Paragraph 113: "One way to free up space on the Board's agenda would be to delegate authority to the President to approve new loans and grants. A system could be put in place for the Board to be enabled to have a discussion on a specifically innovative project or otherwise of particular, including political, interest, but this would be an exception rather than the rule. This is consistent with the recommendation of the IEE and it would lead to cost savings, including in the translation of documents."</p> <p>Appendix I, paragraph 170: "However, there are still items on the agenda that in principle could be delegated to the President, particularly the approval of loans and grants. After the introduction in 2011 of lapse-of-time approval for loans below US\$15 million, recently raised to US\$25 million, about 60 per cent of them are still scheduled for discussion. The survey of EB members showed that a large majority do not favour cutting back on this item or delegating it fully to the President"</p>	<p>EB108 minutes: "Divergent views were expressed with regard to, inter alia: ... Delegation to the President of approval of projects and programmes;... she [The representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela] did not support the proposal to delegate approval of all loans and grants to the President, since the approval of resources for projects was one of the main functions of the Executive Board. Concerns in this regard were also echoed by other Board members."</p> <p>EC77 minutes: "Delegation of authority to the President for the approval of project and programme proposals. There was broad agreement that approval of project and programme proposals should remain within the purview of the Executive Board, as this fostered greater involvement in IFAD's core operations and interaction with country offices and staff. However, consideration could be given to increasing the financing ceiling for proposals submitted for Board approval under the lapse-of-time procedure and by correspondence. IOE provided clarification that the spirit of the recommendation was that the Executive Board would nonetheless retain the right to request that a particular proposal be considered during a formal Board session. In addition, it was suggested that due consideration be given to the option of having the Board approve country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs), inclusive of resource frameworks."</p>

Governing body	Recommendations and actions	CLEE reference	Deliberations at EB108 (April 2013) and EC77 (June 2013), ¹ as relevant for each issue
	Code of Conduct for Board members	<p>Paragraph 114: "the evaluation notes the lack of a Code of Conduct for Board members – a normal integrity requirement in other IFIs. For example, there have been instances when IFAD Board members have applied for staff positions at IFAD. There is no reason why Board members should not be allowed to join as staff members through the regular competitive process, but as in other institutions, this should be allowed only following an established "cooling off" period after completion of their Board assignment."</p> <p>Appendix I, paragraph 172: "Basic governance standards demand a Code of Conduct for Board members as an integrity requirement and such a Code is a normal feature for an IFI. Particular importance is attached by Management and a number of Board members to the introduction of a cooling-off period. For example, there have been instances of pressure to appoint sitting members to staff and management positions in IFAD, including in IOE. This contravenes the separation of powers needed for the supervisory role of the Board. The issue of a Code of Conduct has been around for a number of years. A code should at least rule on conflict of interest, acceptance and granting of gifts, and a cooling-off period."</p>	<p>EB108 minutes: "Divergent views were expressed with regard to, inter alia: ... Development of a Code of Conduct for the Executive Board (it was agreed that this issue, which had been the subject of an Executive Board informal seminar, would be considered by Convenors and Friends with a view to reverting to the Executive Board)"</p> <p>EC77 minutes: "Code of conduct for Executive Board representatives. A number of members expressed their support for this initiative and the Committee noted that this issue would be considered by Convenors and Friends at its forthcoming meeting on 30 July."</p> <p><i>Note: At Convenors and Friends this issue was held over to allow for consultations with capitals. It will be re-introduced at the September session of Convenors and Friends.</i></p>
	Introduction of broad guidelines to facilitate the selection by Member States of their Board representatives	Paragraph 115: "The heterogeneity of the background of IFAD Board members – due to its hybrid nature as both a specialized agency of the United Nations and an IFI – enhances diversity of views and perspectives in the deliberations. At the same time, IFAD also lacks guidelines for the qualifications (e.g. in terms of experience and expertise) of Board representatives in contrast notably to other IFIs. Though sovereign Member States are entitled to nominate anyone they deem suitable as their Board representative, the introduction of broad guidelines to facilitate the selection by Member States of their Board representatives could contribute to the quality of the debate and efficiency."	<p>EC77 minutes: "Code of conduct for Executive Board representatives. ... With respect to the proposal to establish terms of reference for Executive Board representatives, IOE clarified that broad guidelines rather than detailed terms of reference were envisaged. One member suggested that targeted introductory orientation sessions could be organized for Board members."</p>

Governing body	Recommendations and actions	CLEE reference	Deliberations at EB108 (April 2013) and EC77 (June 2013), ¹ as relevant for each issue
		<p>Appendix I, paragraph 171: "The non-residence of the Board and the fact that Member States rather than individuals with fixed-term appointments are members may explain the absence of qualification guidelines and a Code of Conduct for representatives of Member States in the Board. While the heterogeneity of the Board must be accepted, a job description or broad qualification guidelines could be helpful to Member States in selecting their representatives and improve the available expertise in the Board. On the occasion of a necessary amendment to the Agreement, the Governing Council may wish to make up for the absence of guidelines."</p>	<p><i>Note: At Convenors and Friends this issue was held over to allow for consultations with capitals. It will be re-introduced at the September session of Convenors and Friends.</i></p>
	<p>Allow ex-officio access to the Board room to Committee chairs when these are not the same as EB representatives</p>	<p>Paragraph 116: "Currently, only the Board representative or his/her designated representative is permitted to take part in Board meetings. There have been instances when the Chairs of the Evaluation and/or Audit Committee have been based in their country's embassy in Rome, but are not the designated Board representative. This has caused challenges during Board meetings when the actual Board representative attends, as the Chairs of the Committee under the above circumstances would not be allowed into the Board session, unless the Board representative vacates his/her seat. This limits efficiency and effectiveness, and could be easily resolved if Committee chairs were allowed ex-officio access."</p> <p>Appendix I, paragraph 173: "The Board suffers from weaknesses that are inherent in non-residence, IFAD's hybrid nature as both an IFI and a United Nations organization, and the fact that it works in a politically inconspicuous niche. ... At times the anomaly arises that a committee chairperson, based in Rome, is not the formal appointee of his country to the Board. In that case, the limitation of access to Board meetings to the appointee precludes the chairperson from attending. A practical solution would be to grant committee chairs ex officio access."</p>	<p>EB108 minutes: "Divergent views were expressed with regard to, inter alia: ... Number of Member State representatives having access to Board meetings"</p> <p>EC77 minutes: "Effectiveness of Executive Board sessions. ... On a logistical point, a number of members expressed support for the recommendation that two representatives for each country on the Executive Board be allowed access to Board sessions. Moreover, the Chairpersons of the Audit and Evaluation Committees should have permanent seats in the Board room in addition to those already held by their countries' Board representatives. One member called for Board representatives to be granted access to sessions of the Governing Council."</p>

Governing body	Recommendations and actions	CLEE reference	Deliberations at EB108 (April 2013) and EC77 (June 2013), ¹ as relevant for each issue
Audit Committee	Full disclosure of AC documents	<p>Paragraph 117: "...In addition, they [the AC] review other important documents that are not placed before the Board. All Evaluation Committee documents are made publicly available through the IFAD website, which is not the case for the Audit Committee and this might be worth considering towards strengthening efficiency in communication, transparency and accountability."</p> <p>Appendix I, paragraph 175: "All EC documents are made publicly available through the IFAD website, which is not the case for the AC. This might be worth considering towards strengthening transparency and accountability."</p>	EC77 minutes: " Disclosure of Audit Committee documents. Committee members were advised that while these documents were not subject to disclosure under the IFAD Policy on the Disclosure of Documents, the Board could decide to expand the policy in the interests of increased transparency. However, given the nature of some documents presented to the Audit Committee, a certain restriction on disclosure might need to be retained."
	Acquire outside professional/technical expertise to support its oversight of IFAD's finances	<p>Paragraph 118: "The evaluation finds that, in line with the trend in the financial and business sectors in general, the Audit Committee should consider acquiring outside professional/technical expertise to support its oversight of IFAD's finances."</p> <p>Appendix I, paragraph 174: "Committee preparation in support of the Board, as in all the IFIs, proves to be essential to the Board's ability to deal with strategic and policy issues and carry out its fiduciary duties.</p> <p>... There are opportunities to strengthen the role of the AC in IFAD. Present-day audit committees of companies and financial organizations, including the IFIs, require expertise on controls and risk management among their membership. Recent professionalization and reform of the financial management of IFAD have raised the level at which financial issues need to be discussed. The experience in the business sector is that benefits can be gained from attracting outsiders with the requisite background as members of or advisors to ACs. The 2009 TOR of the AC only allow it to bring in external expertise in exceptional circumstances subject to budgetary space. An amendment to the TOR would be needed to make the presence of outside advice the norm for those meetings in which the AC's oversight of financial issues is at stake."</p>	

Governing body	Recommendations and actions	CLEE reference	Deliberations at EB108 (April 2013) and EC77 (June 2013), ¹ as relevant for each issue
	Enhance reports of AC to the EB, highlighting recs and remaining controversial issues	<p>Paragraph 118: "However, the reports of the two Committees to the Board do not always indicate clearly the recommendations they would like the Board to adopt and remaining controversial issues for the Board to consider. To do so systematically would allow the Board to focus on selected issues and enhance efficiency."</p> <p>Appendix I, paragraph 177: "The rapidly evolving demands on Governing Body members for strategic guidance and oversight of IFAD's changing business model are not yet receiving adequate attention from Board members and Management itself. ... The scope, quality and timeliness of its reporting to the Board are a major determinant of the Board's ability to fulfil its supervisory duties adequately and hold Management accountable. Committee discussion must focus on what matters and chairpersons' reports to the Board on the recommendations of the Board and on what requires further discussion."</p>	EC77 minutes: " Clarity of Committee reports to the Board. The Secretariat took note of suggestions for improved clarity, particularly with respect to recommendations for the Board."
Evaluation Committee	Enhance reports of the EC to the EB, highlighting recommendations and remaining controversial issues	<p>Paragraph 118: "However, the reports of the two Committees to the Board do not always indicate clearly the recommendations they would like the Board to adopt and remaining controversial issues for the Board to consider. To do so systematically would allow the Board to focus on selected issues and enhance efficiency."</p> <p>Appendix I, paragraph 177: "The rapidly evolving demands on Governing Body members for strategic guidance and oversight of IFAD's changing business model are not yet receiving adequate attention from Board members and Management itself. ... The scope, quality and timeliness of its reporting to the Board are a major determinant of the Board's ability to fulfil its supervisory duties adequately and hold Management accountable. Committee discussion must focus on what matters and chairpersons' reports to the Board on the recommendations of the Board and on what requires further discussion."</p>	EC77 minutes: " Clarity of Committee reports to the Board. The Secretariat took note of suggestions for improved clarity, particularly with respect to recommendations for the Board."

Governing body	Recommendations and actions	CLEE reference	Deliberations at EB108 (April 2013) and EC77 (June 2013), ¹ as relevant for each issue
Convenors and Friends	Document decisions in the minutes of Convenor and Friends meetings to provide transparency to the process as well as improve flow of communication and information	Paragraph 119: "Given the Board's non-resident nature, IFAD has an informal mechanism for ensuring continuity of dialogue among Member States and IFAD Management between Board meetings, known as the "List Convenors and Friends". Important matters are raised and often resolved through this platform. However, it remains an informal platform. It may be worth considering establishing a practice of documenting decisions in the minutes of their meetings to provide transparency to the process as well as improve flow of communication and information, as is done by the other subsidiary bodies of the Board."	EC77 minutes: " Convenors and Friends. In answer to some queries regarding reporting procedures for Convenor and Friends meetings, the Committee was advised that notes of the meetings of Convenors and Friends with the President were drawn up and distributed to meeting participants. Such notes could be distributed within the Lists by the respective Convenors; this would also have the benefit of allowing all members to provide input to the agendas of these meetings."
Classification of IFAD Member States into three Lists	Review the relevance of the List system	<p>Paragraph 121: "This concerns the classification of IFAD Member States into three Lists (A, B and C). This is a fundamental question, as the List system has far-reaching implications for governance, voice and representation, and therefore effectiveness and efficiency of the entire Governing Bodies architecture of IFAD. The List system (or Categories I, II and III as they were previously called) was appropriate when IFAD was established. However, it might be worth considering if the List system is still relevant in today's global context, especially in light of the economic, developmental and geopolitical evolution of IFAD Member States over the years. The evaluation has not dwelled on this extensively, but it is a topic that has efficiency implications and will need to be addressed in the future."</p> <p>Appendix I, paragraph 163: "One of IFAD's strengths is that the constituent elements of its Governing Bodies, particularly of the Board, do not feel underrepresented.</p> <p>... The division of the membership into A, B and C Lists ensures that the three groupings (roughly OECD, OPEC and developing countries) which constituted IFAD from the start are always represented in meetings. The role of constituencies in the A and B Lists is complementary to the List system and consists in regulating alternation between members and alternates or temporary absence from the Board. In the C List, three sub-Lists</p>	EB108 minutes: "Divergent views were expressed with regard to, inter alia: The List structure; ... - Rotation and membership of governing bodies."

Governing body	Recommendations and actions	CLEE reference	Deliberations at EB108 (April 2013) and EC77 (June 2013), ¹ as relevant for each issue
		<p>fulfil a similar role. At the same time, it should be noted that the List structure has entailed a rigidity in Board (and committee) representation by allocating a fixed number of chairs to each List. This would not be a problem if the relative contributions of the Lists to replenishments had remained steady. However, the contribution of the B List has declined severely over time and that of the C List has strongly increased. While perhaps not of acute urgency, this issue should not be neglected."</p>	