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"Strengthening the Informal Joint Meeting of the RBA Governing Bodies"

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Purpose:

The Informal Joint Meeting of the Governing Bodies of the UN Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) has become a valuable platform for dialogue among Members of the FAO Council, IFAD Executive Board and WFP Executive Board on issues of common strategic importance. As the RBAs continue to deepen collaboration in support of the global food security objectives, there is merit in considering ways to further enhance the effectiveness, inclusiveness and impact of the Informal Joint Meeting.

This paper proposes several improvements related to agenda setting, participation of Members, timing, expected outcomes and follow-up arrangements.

I. Strengthening Agenda Setting:

A. Greater Member Involvement in Agenda Development

To reinforce Member ownership of the process, the agenda should be developed through a more structured and inclusive consultation mechanism.

Possible approaches include:

- Inviting Members of the Governing Bodies of all three RBAs to present agenda proposals several months before the meeting, for consideration by the Chairpersons;
- Circulating a preliminary list of proposed agenda items to Members for comments and prioritization;
- Ensuring that agenda items reflect both institutional priorities and issues identified by Members as requiring inter-agency discussion.

Such an approach would enhance the relevance of discussions and strengthen Member engagement.

B. Strategic Criteria for Agenda Selection

Agenda items should be selected based on agreed criteria, including:

- Relevance to all three RBAs;
- Strategic importance for global food security, nutrition and rural development;
- Potential to benefit from joint policy guidance by Members;
- Opportunities to advance RBA collaboration and coherence;
- Emerging challenges requiring coordinated responses.

A limited number of substantive agenda items should be preferred over a broad agenda, allowing for more constructive discussion.

C. Early Circulation of Documentation

Background papers and discussion notes, if applicable, should be circulated sufficiently in advance of the meeting to facilitate informed participation and meaningful exchanges.

As a general principle, documentation should be made available at least four weeks before the meeting.

II. Optimizing the Timing and Format of the Meeting:

A. Alignment with the Calendars of the RBA Governing Bodies

The timing of the Informal Joint Meeting should be coordinated with the calendars of the FAO Council, IFAD Executive Board and WFP Executive Board to maximize participation by Members and senior management. The Meeting should be held once per year, with the possibility of holding an additional meeting, upon the request of Members and following consultations among the Chairpersons of the three Governing Bodies.

Consideration could be given to:

- Holding the meeting at a predictable period each year;
- Scheduling it sufficiently ahead of major Governing Body sessions so that discussions can inform subsequent deliberations.

B. Duration and Structure

To encourage substantive exchanges, consideration may be given to:

- Limiting the number of agenda items;
- Organizing thematic sessions focused on strategic issues;
- Allocating dedicated time for Member interventions and interactive discussion;
- Including occasional forward-looking discussions on emerging global trends affecting food security and agricultural systems.

C. Hybrid Participation

Maintaining hybrid participation arrangements would help ensure broad and inclusive engagement, particularly for Members with limited capacity to attend in person.

D. Invitation of the Principals of the three RBAs

The Principals of the three RBAs shall be invited to attend all Meetings, including any additional meetings convened pursuant to paragraph A of this section.

III. Clarifying Expected Outcomes:

A. Agreed Chairpersons' Summary

While preserving the informal nature of the meeting, a concise Chairpersons' Summary could be issued after each session.

The Summary could:

- Highlight key messages emerging from discussions;
- Capture areas of convergence among Members;
- Identify recommendations for further consideration by the Governing Bodies and management of the RBAs.

The Summary would not constitute negotiated text but would serve as a useful institutional record.

B. Action-Oriented Conclusions (To be included in the Chairpersons' Summary)

Where appropriate, discussions could identify practical areas for enhanced cooperation among the RBAs and provide strategic guidance on issues requiring further attention.

The focus should be on generating added value beyond information sharing.

IV. Strengthening Follow-Up Mechanisms:

A. Tracking Recommendations

A light and pragmatic follow-up mechanism could be established to monitor actions arising from previous meetings.

This could include:

- A standing agenda item reviewing progress on recommendations from earlier meetings;
- A brief management report on actions taken in response to previous discussions;
- Identification of issues requiring continued Members' attention.

B. Enhanced Reporting to Governing Bodies

The outcomes of the Informal Joint Meeting should be systematically communicated to the Governing Bodies of the three RBAs through established reporting channels.

This would strengthen institutional linkages and ensure that discussions contribute to broader governance processes.

C. Periodic Review of the Mechanism

Members may wish to consider a periodic review of the Informal Joint Meeting, for example every three years, to assess:

- Its relevance and effectiveness;
- The usefulness of outcomes and follow-up arrangements;
- Opportunities for further improvement.

V. Conclusion:

The Informal Joint Meeting of the RBA Governing Bodies has become an important forum for fostering coherence, coordination and strategic dialogue among the Governing Bodies of the Rome-based Agencies. By strengthening Member participation in agenda setting, improving the focus of discussions, clarifying expected outcomes and enhancing follow-up, the mechanism can continue to evolve and provide greater value to Members and the organizations alike.

The proposals contained in this paper are offered for discussion with the aim of supporting a more effective, inclusive and action-oriented Informal Joint Meeting of the RBA Governing Bodies in the years ahead.
