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**Executive Board  
Second Regular Session**

**Rome, 6–10 November 2006**

## **POLICY ISSUES**

**Agenda item 4**

*For information\**



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## **REVIEW OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME APPROVAL PROCESS**



\* In accordance with the Executive Board's decisions on governance, approved at the Annual and Third Regular Sessions, 2000, items for information should not be discussed unless a Board member specifically requests it, well in advance of the meeting, and the Chair accepts the request on the grounds that it is a proper use of the Board's time.

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## NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

**This document is submitted to the Executive Board for information.**

The Secretariat invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document to contact the WFP staff focal points indicated below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting.

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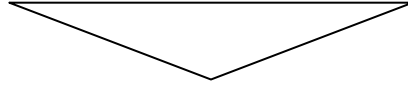
Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact Ms C. Panlilio, Administrative Assistant, Conference Servicing Unit (tel.: 066513-2645).

\* External Relations Division

\*\* New York Liaison Office



## DRAFT DECISION\*



The Board takes note of “Review of the Country Programme Approval Process”  
(WFP/EB.2/2006/4-F)

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\* This is a draft decision. For the final decision adopted by the Board, please refer to the Decisions and Recommendations document (document WFP/EB.2/2006/16) issued at the end of the session.



## REVIEW OF THE COUNTRY PROGRAMME APPROVAL PROCESS

1. In 2001–2002, the Executive Committee (ExCom) agencies of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) – the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and WFP – agreed to harmonize country programming processes in keeping with the 2001 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review (TCPR) and General Assembly Resolution 56/201, which encouraged the organizations of the United Nations system to continue efforts to improve the effectiveness and relevance of the United Nations operational activities for development (WFP/EB.3/2002/4-B).
2. The subsequent TCPR and General Assembly Resolution 59/250 of 2004 again stressed the importance of coherence, effectiveness and relevance of operational activities for development. In UNDP/UNFPA decision 2005/28 and UNICEF decision 2005/9, the executive boards affirmed those principles by requesting that a joint report be presented for discussion at their annual sessions in 2006 with proposals to improve further the harmonized country programme approval procedure. WFP’s Executive Board also expressed its desire to continue to discuss simplification of the country programming process.
3. The ExCom agency secretariats prepared a paper for discussion by the executive boards at their annual sessions in June 2006; it was submitted to the WFP Board as document WFP/EB.A/2006/5-A. The executive boards of UNICEF, UNDP and UNFPA appreciated the joint agency effort and reaffirmed the importance of improving the harmonization of the country programme process for achieving development results in the shortest timeframe and with national leadership at the centre of the process. However, many were apprehensive about changes proposed in isolation of discussions in the context of the United Nations reform debate; several thought that the proposal went beyond paragraphs 49 and 50 of General Assembly resolution 59/250 (2004 TCPR resolution). Informal board discussions were therefore conducted, after which the agencies were requested to make further proposals as stipulated in UNDP/UNFPA decision 2005/28 and UNICEF decision 2005/9, focusing on the approval process for country programmes rather than on a consolidated United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).
4. UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, in consultation with WFP, then prepared a paper for submission in September to the second regular sessions of the three New York boards, with options to improve and streamline the current harmonized country programme approval process by shortening the timeframe for country programme approval and improving the synchronization of country programmes with national country plans and strategies while maintaining the institutional integrity and organizational mandate of each agency. On 8 September 2006 and on 13 September 2006 the UNICEF board and the UNDP/UNFPA board respectively adopted similar decisions (attached as Annexes I and II), of which the two main elements were:
  - i) board approval of country programmes at the second regular session rather than the first regular session of the following year; and
  - ii) continued efforts by the agencies to improve results-based planning and management, and improved alignment of country programmes with national plans and strategies, with the outcomes established in the UNDAF.



5. The decisions taken by the UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA boards pertain to changes to the existing country programme approval procedures rather than to the more comprehensive changes to the UNDAF and country programme structure presented to the ExCom agencies' annual sessions in June 2006. Hence no additional action by the WFP Board is required on this matter for the foreseeable future, because existing WFP procedures are already consistent with the streamlined approach to a harmonized country programme approval process as decided in September by the other ExCom agency boards. This report is presented to WFP's Executive Board for information only because:
- i) WFP country programmes are normally approved at second regular sessions rather than the first regular session of the following year, as outlined in document WFP/EB.2/2003/INF/6;
  - ii) WFP continues to coordinate with other undg agencies to improve the UNDAF results matrix through linkages to national plans and strategies, and with agencies' country programmes. The undg Programme Group, chaired this year by WFP's Senior Deputy Executive Director, has established a Working Group on Programming Policies to guide further development of those linkages and to support United Nations country teams as they prepare UNDAF results matrices linked to national plans and strategies.



## ANNEX I

### Decision by the UNICEF Executive Board on “Review of the country programme approval process”

2006/19

#### Review of the country programme approval process

*The Executive Board,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 59/250 of 22 December 2004 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system,

*Decides* that:

1. In order to decrease the time frame for the country programme approval process and to create more scope for synchronization with the length of national programme cycles, draft country programme documents will continue to be presented for discussion at the annual session of the Executive Board, as per existing practice. The revised country programme documents will then be posted on the website of the organization no later than six weeks after the discussion, and a hard copy of the revised documents will be provided, upon request, to Board Members by the secretariat. The country programmes will then be approved by the Board at its second regular session, on a no-objection basis without presentation or discussion, unless at least five members have informed the secretariat in writing before the session of their wish to bring a particular country programme before the Executive Board. Approval of country programmes for which revised country programme documents were not posted within six weeks will be postponed to the first regular session of the Executive Board, the following year;
2. The submission and approval of country programmes by the Executive Board will continue to follow the guidelines for length and content adopted in its decision 2002/4 (paragraph 1 (b)). Continued efforts should be made to improve results-based planning and management, and to strengthen the alignment of country programmes with national strategies and with the approved medium-term strategic plan. The UNICEF country programme documents should clearly contribute to and derive from the national plan and strategies, as well as the outcomes established in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), in countries where the UNDAF exists.

*Second regular session*

*8 September 2006*



**ANNEX II****Decision by the UNDP and UNFPA Executive Board on “Review of the country programme approval process”****2006/36****Review of the country programme approval process***The Executive Board,*

*Recalling* General Assembly resolution 59/250 of 22 December 2004 on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system,

*Decides* that:

1. In order to decrease the time frame for the country programme approval process and to create more scope for synchronization with the length of national programme cycles, draft country programme documents will continue to be presented for discussion at the annual session of the Executive Board, as per existing practice. The revised country programme documents will then be posted on the website of the organization no later than six weeks after the discussion, and a hard copy of the revised documents will be provided, upon request, to Board Members by the secretariat. The country programmes will then be approved by the Board at its second regular session, on a no-objection basis without presentation or discussion, unless at least five members have informed the secretariat in writing before the session of their wish to bring a particular country programme before the Executive Board. Approval of country programmes for which revised country programme documents were not posted within six weeks will be postponed to the first regular session of the Executive Board, the following year;
2. The submission and approval of country programmes by the Executive Board will continue to follow the guidelines for length and content adopted in its decision 2001/11. Continued efforts should be made to improve results-based planning and management, and to strengthen the alignment of country programmes with national strategies and with the approved medium-term strategic plan. The UNDP and UNFPA country programme documents should clearly contribute to and derive from the national plan and strategies, as well as from the outcomes established in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), in countries where the UNDAF exists.

*13 September 2006*