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REPORTS BY THE JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

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NOTE TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

This document is submitted for information to the Executive Board.

Pursuant to the decisions taken on the methods of work by the Executive Board at its First Regular Session of 1996, the documentation prepared by the Secretariat for the Board has been kept brief and decision-oriented. The meetings of the Executive Board are to be conducted in a business-like manner, with increased dialogue and exchanges between delegations and the Secretariat. Efforts to promote these guiding principles will continue to be pursued by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat therefore invites members of the Board who may have questions of a technical nature with regard to this document, to contact the WFP staff member(s) listed below, preferably well in advance of the Board's meeting. This procedure is designed to facilitate the Board's consideration of the document in the plenary.

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BACKGROUND

1. The Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) was established by United Nations General Assembly resolution 2150 (XXI) in 1966, and began work in 1968. It is composed of 11 inspectors with broad powers of investigation in all matters bearing on the efficiency of services and the proper use of funds by the United Nations system. JIU evaluates whether activities undertaken by “participating organizations” are carried out in the most economical manner and ensures that optimum use is made of resources available for carrying out these activities.
2. The participating organizations of the Joint Inspection Unit are the United Nations, its affiliated bodies and 14 specialized agencies which accept the JIU Statute. By virtue of its dual parentage, i.e., the United Nations and FAO, WFP is a “participating organization”. Reports of the Unit are addressed to the Executive Heads of participating organizations for further transmission to the legislative bodies of these organizations.

REPORTS RELEVANT TO THE WORK OF WFP

3. JIU issued seven reports in 1997. Of these, four are of interest or concern to the World Food Programme (WFP) and its Executive Board, and are the subject of the present note.
4. During 1997, WFP continued to extend full cooperation to JIU. For example, the Programme recommended that a system-wide study on the possibility of a lump sum payment for the shipment of staff members’ household goods be included in JIU’s annual work programme. Meetings at WFP headquarters were arranged for JIU Inspectors in connection with planned studies; questionnaires were completed; and comments on the drafts or final versions of JIU reports were provided by WFP.
5. The contents of the JIU reports were taken into account in the activities of WFP when relevant to the Programme’s mandate. The reports of most direct concern to WFP are described below.

JIU/REP/97/1: Strengthening Field Representation of the United Nations System

6. This report contributes towards efforts to achieve a more unified and effective field presence of the United Nations family. However, in examining this report, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), of which WFP is a member, noted that the period of research and drafting for the report coincided with the preparation by the Secretary-General of a series of measures and proposals on United Nations reform, in which development cooperation was a prominent theme. Thereafter, the Secretary-General presented a report to the General Assembly outlining his measures and proposals for United Nations reform (A/51/950). The relevance of the JIU report thus needs to be seen in the overall context of a rapidly evolving situation.
7. The basic issues that this report examines include: the Resident Coordinator system; cooperation among the United Nations system representatives in the field; the relationship between field offices and headquarters; support to host countries; complementarity and division of labour on an inter-agency basis to cope with specific needs of the country(ies) of assignment; efficient and effective use of tools and mechanisms such as the Country



Strategy Note (CSN); thematic groups and field committees; and rationalization and streamlining of administrative services on an inter-agency basis.

8. Five out of nine recommendations concern the field level and focus on the Resident Coordinator system, thematic groups with a lead agency and common premises. Other recommendations call for more systematic support by headquarters to the Resident Coordinator system; the creation by host countries of mechanisms that are counterpart to the Resident Coordinator system; and greater shared responsibilities by developed and developing countries, including continued and predictable financial contributions. The last recommendation calls for a more vigorous monitoring of the decision-making process to be undertaken by all the legislative bodies of the United Nations system.
9. WFP strongly supports the strengthening of the Resident Coordinator system, and confirms its commitment to close collaboration with its sister agencies. Within the reform package proposed by the Secretary-General, WFP has identified the following priorities for 1998:
 - a) ensuring the use of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) as the common ground for the formulation of country programmes and projects;
 - b) strengthening the Resident Coordinator system and improving procedures for selection and appraisal of Resident Coordinators; and
 - c) promoting the establishment of "United Nations Houses" and the use of common services at the country level in those countries where WFP supports a programme that is geared predominantly towards development.
10. Furthermore, WFP is committed to:
 - a) enhancing the role of the United Nations in capacity-building; and
 - b) increasing collaboration at the country level with governments and the larger donor community.

JIU/REP/97/3: Execution of Humanitarian Assistance Programmes through Implementing Partners

11. As the organizations of the United Nations system increase the number of implementation agreements with partners outside the system, the question of accountability arises. This report examines the principles governing the financial control between the organizations of the United Nations system and their implementing partners, including the criteria and methods of selection of implementing partners; legal, administrative and financial procedures; controlling mechanisms; and reporting procedures.
12. All recommendations are of an operational nature. They call for an attempt to classify the different types of implementing partners according to their activity and performance, and for more selectivity in identifying implementing partners. They also relate to accountability, and recommend that existing agreements always include a provision for fund accountability and adequate audit, as well as monitoring and evaluation of implementing partners' activities. The report also stresses the need for a clear, written definition of responsibilities in case of default and for administrative and financial procedures for short-term and long-term humanitarian assistance.
13. WFP is in the process of drafting a new "Programme Design Manual" which will incorporate all policies, guidelines and procedures for food aid programming and design, and will include a section on NGOs. References will be made to: procedures for



contracting with an NGO; recommended criteria for selection; capacity-building; harmonization of reporting requirements; and a “standard local agreement” to be signed at the country level. In addition, the Programme is designing a pro-forma contract which will list all budget items to be considered in the financial agreement; this will be discussed with major NGO partners before finalization.

14. WFP has established an annual WFP/NGO consultation. This provides a forum for discussing policy issues of common interest, sharing views on operational matters of particular importance and keeping relevant procedures for collaboration under regular review.

JIU/REP/97/4: Coordination at Headquarters and Field Level between United Nations Agencies involved in Peace-Building: an Assessment of Possibilities

15. This report was prepared at the request of UNESCO, which asked JIU to conduct a review of the coordination of peace-building activities. While recognizing the prominent role played by the country emerging from a conflict in all matters related to reconstruction, the report focuses on issues related only to the coordination among United Nations organizations involved in post-conflict peace-building.
16. The Inspectors recommend that the coordination framework for post-conflict peace-building be sufficiently flexible to adjust to the unique aspects of each situation. They conclude that an agreement ending a conflict provides a good platform for articulating a coordination framework to be used during recovery, and recommend that such a framework be established during the initial reconstruction planning phases. Existing coordinating bodies such as the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) are to be strengthened and ongoing coordination efforts expanded along thematic lines. It is also recommended that the United Nations organizations establish coordination linkages with the Bretton Woods institutions to ensure their participation in the planning phases of post-conflict recovery and a sustainable, coordinated relationship throughout reconstruction.
17. The World Food Programme welcomes the report’s emphasis on strengthening United Nations coordination and collaboration mechanisms related to post-conflict peace-building. Since it is in a good position to play a major role in the continuum from emergency relief to development, WFP has made a firm commitment to supporting those initiatives undertaken within the United Nations system to enhance coordination at the headquarters and field levels in peace-building. The overall, collective aim is to build self-reliance, a critical element in sustainable peace-building.
18. WFP fully concurs with the premise that existing coordination bodies and mechanisms should be drawn upon to strengthen post-conflict peace-building without creating new structures. In this regard, it is quite important that the role of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA) be noted and its potential for greater involvement in this area assessed. As the report cites the need to establish a link between the peace-keeping and peace-building phases, ECHA would seem well constituted to address issues related to the coherence of approaches within the United Nations system at the policy and operational levels.



JIU/REP/97/5: The Challenge of Outsourcing for the United Nations System

19. This report examines outsourcing as currently practised in the United Nations organizations, and addresses the significant potential benefits of outsourcing, while acknowledging the potential problems. Solutions are proposed. The report signals the need for a policy on outsourcing and the benefits to be gained, and concludes with suggestions for structural and/or procedural changes within United Nations organizations and enhanced coordination among the organizations on the use of outsourcing.
20. As indicated in paragraph 114 of the WFP budget for 1998-99 (WFP/EB.3/97/4-A), in order to achieve more audit coverage with fewer resources, the Office of Internal Audit will expand outsourcing of audit services when conducting audits in regional and country offices and in highly specialized areas at headquarters. Outsourcing of regional and country office audits will increase audit coverage by 30 to 40 percent using the same level of resources.
21. Outsourcing of services is still not very widespread in Italy, and these kinds of arrangements are a novelty to many service companies. During 1997, WFP started a rationalization exercise to introduce more cost-effective means of providing administrative and maintenance services. Cost comparison studies for photocopying facilities, building maintenance programmes and security services indicated that outsourcing would not only be cost-effective (i.e., cheaper in economic terms), but it would also bring about savings in reduced administrative management costs. For services previously outsourced, such as electrical maintenance and servicing of fire extinguishers in the headquarters building, these were consolidated into single service contracts to reduce accounting and supervision requirements. As a result, two positions vacated by retirements were not filled. Additional security guards required in the new WFP headquarters building were provided by external contractors at considerably less cost than direct employment.
22. WFP outsources all interpretation and about 60 percent of translation needs.
 - a) In the case of interpretation, close coordination has been established with the other Rome-based United Nations organizations for the programming of meetings and recruitment of non-local interpreters. With a view to maximizing the use of staff time for interpreters, utilizing as much local capacity as available as well as sharing travel costs, salaries and subsistence allowances among the organizations, WFP secures the services of FAO staff interpreters and local and non-local free-lance interpreters. The arrangement has proven highly satisfactory in fulfilling the interpretation needs of the Programme, while maintaining a high quality service, at reasonable costs.
 - b) As for translation, given the pattern of meetings and submission of documents during a few peak periods per year, a proportion of documents is translated externally. In order to ensure uniformity of style and conformity to WFP standards, staff translators revise the work of free-lance contractors, provide reference and terminology support, and oversee the quality and consistency of the manuscripts translated externally. This modality of outsourcing is considered cost-effective, allowing a relatively high degree of control over the quality of the output and granting the required flexibility to accommodate the changing demands of the Programme.
23. In 1997, JIU also issued the following three reports:



JIU/REP/97/2: United Nations Publications: Enhancing Cost-Effectiveness in Implementing Legislative Mandates - mainly covers issues related to publications by the United Nations Secretariat

JIU/REP/97/6: Training Institutions in the United Nations System: Programmes and Activities

A/52/34: Annual Report of the Joint Inspection Unit to the General Assembly

24. Copies of all reports, in all the WFP working languages, may be obtained from the Documentation and Meetings Clerk.

