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SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE ANNUAL SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, 1999

In accordance with the methods of work of the Executive Board, the present document reflects the main points of its deliberations to be taken into account by the Secretariat in the implementation of the Board's decisions and recommendations, contained in document WFP/EB.A/99/10.

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ANNUAL REPORTS

Annual Report of the Executive Director: 1998 (1999/EB.A/1)

1. In introducing her Annual Report for 1998, the Executive Director noted that, in line with the Board's decision at its First Regular Session of 1999, General Assembly resolution 53/192 and ECOSOC guidance, the current Annual Report also included two Appendices. The Executive Director noted that 1998 had been one of the most challenging years in WFP's history.
2. The Board welcomed the new structure of the Annual Report, in particular Appendix 1.
3. The Board paid tribute to the 12 staff members who lost their lives in service to the hungry poor in 1998, and extended its condolences to their families. The Board endorsed WFP's initiative to establish the Field Security Task Force and the Security Training Awareness Programme.
4. The Board highlighted some issues of particular significance:
 - the need to maintain an adequate level of food aid for development. The Board was greatly concerned over the decline in development resources;
 - the usefulness of the Protracted Relief and Recovery approach in facilitating a more effective transition from relief to recovery;
 - the importance of meeting the targets of at least 50 percent of WFP's development resources to least developed countries (LDCs) and at least 90 percent to low-income, food-deficit countries (LIFDCs);
 - the increase in the proportion of directed contributions, which may jeopardize the multilateral character of the Programme;
 - the importance of all donors adhering to the policies approved by the Board with respect to resources and long-term financing;
 - the importance of WFP's active participation in the United Nations reform process and in strengthened inter-agency collaboration with other United Nations agencies and NGOs; and
 - the collaboration between Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) and Food Insecurity Vulnerability and Mapping Systems (FIVIMs), in particular the need to report results to national authorities and local communities.
5. It was suggested that future annual reports place greater emphasis on the difficulties and problems encountered by WFP and the effectiveness of its activities.

Annual Report of the Executive Board to ECOSOC and the FAO Council on Its Activities: 1998 (1999/EB.A/3)

6. The President of the Board for 1998 introduced the Annual Report of the Executive Board to ECOSOC and the FAO Council on its activities for that year. She reiterated that the report should be read in conjunction with the Annual Report of the Executive Director for 1998 and its Appendices, and pointed out that 1998 had been a particularly fruitful and active year for the Board. The Board held 55 meetings in addition to its regular and annual sessions, which pointed to a greater interaction and dialogue



between the membership and the Secretariat. Board members undertook visits to WFP field operations in Ethiopia, Guatemala and Nicaragua, which provided them with an insight into the implementation of WFP's policies and strategies.

7. The Board expressed satisfaction with the overview of activities for 1998, and thanked the former President for her work throughout that year.

POLICY ISSUES

Food Aid and Development (1999/EB.A/2)

8. The Board welcomed the document "Enabling Development", and expressed appreciation for the work the Secretariat had done during the Development Policy Review. Representatives were satisfied that their comments on previous drafts had been taken into account in the document presented. The Board acknowledged that the recommendations, including the five priority areas, gave a clear and logical orientation to WFP's development activities. Moreover, the document could be seen as WFP's contribution to achieving the goals of the World Food Summit. Although the recommendations were approved, and the sharper focus given by the new policy was very much appreciated, some representatives expressed reserve with regard to food aid for development.
9. The Board stressed the need to now concentrate on implementation. The importance of a regular review of the implementation process was considered critical for the success of the new development orientation. The Board wished to be kept fully informed on the implementation of the new policy.
10. Some representatives cautioned that WFP's excellence in emergencies should not be compromised by the requirements of implementing the new development policies. The Executive Director underlined that emergency and recovery operations would not suffer from the organizational changes required by the new policy. Indeed, many of the system changes needed for the new development portfolio would benefit operational capacity in both emergency operations (EMOPs) and protracted relief and recovery operations (PRROs).
11. The Board reiterated the importance of coordination, partnership and the complementarity of assistance in carrying out the policy recommendations. It was pointed out that the title of the document, "Enabling Development", embodied the notion of both partnership and complementarity.
12. National governments were seen as the most important partner for WFP. WFP should collaborate with governments which show the necessary commitment to improving the situation of the hungry poor. It was pointed out, however, that even though a commitment to development exists, capacity may be lacking, and this should be taken into account. The importance of incorporating capacity-building into the design and implementation of projects was stressed. Moreover, both positive and negative factors affecting the enabling environment need to be identified, and risks should be included in project assessments.
13. The Board welcomed WFP's emphasis on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for its development activities and supported the central role UNDAF plays and will continue to play in the preparation and design of Country Programmes. Cooperation with the Rome-based United Nations agencies, in particular, was stressed, and a revitalization of collaboration with technical agencies, including FAO, was suggested as



one measure for successful implementation of the new policy directives. Caution was expressed that while emphasizing technical rigour, other objectives, particularly social objectives, such as the empowerment of women, should receive equal attention.

14. The Board stressed that a choice of the five priority areas, or their combination within a Country Programme, depended on the specific needs of the country. When developing a Country Programme, emphasis must still be placed on country-specific circumstances. The Board noted the need for continued resources for development, and emphasized the particular importance of the multilateral nature of these resources.
15. Food aid for development is a scarce resource. To make the best use of this resource, food aid must be targeted to the neediest countries, and to the poorest populations within those countries. The Board welcomed the document's emphasis on targeting and noted the inclusion of timeliness as an element of targeting. This was commended, particularly as it was seen as a means of reducing the potential risk of dependence.
16. The Board appreciated the Secretariat's commitment to developing indicators to identify when it was most appropriate to use food aid and when it was necessary to phase out. It was suggested that an exit strategy be part of Country Programmes. Representatives also praised WFP's new results-based approach. This type of approach was seen as critical to changing the development portfolio. The Board also noted the need for certain management tools. The usefulness of a logical framework in the implementation of development policies was highlighted by some representatives. The need to develop a checklist of key elements to ensure consistency with policy orientation was also noted.
17. The President summed up this discussion with emphasis on the following elements:
 - The critical nature of partnership with governments in beneficiary countries;
 - Likewise, the importance of an enabling environment;
 - The centrality of coordination within the context of the UNDAF and the Common Country Assessment (CCA);
 - WFP's key role in World Food Summit follow-up, particularly at the country level, in working with FAO to develop country food security strategies;
 - A tool kit and a check list for the successful implementation, including careful targeting, by gender and geography, and the importance of Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) And Food Insecurity Vulnerability Information and Mapping systems (FIVIMS);
 - The equal importance of knowing where and when to intervene with WFP development programmes and knowing when to end that assistance;
 - The need for multilaterally available resources to support development.

WFP Commitments to Women: Mid-term Review of Implementation (1999/EB.A/4)

18. The Board found the report to be very informative and analytical. Representatives were appreciative of its frank presentation of constraints faced by WFP in implementing the Commitments to Women. The Board commended the current status of the implementation of WFP's Commitments to Women, and endorsed the strategies proposed to further pursue them. It was noted that WFP staff are now generally better prepared to implement gender



programming, and that appropriate mechanisms to that effect are in place. The Review's findings and recommendations were regarded as constituting a good starting point for WFP to ensure that the momentum is maintained in attaining the Commitments. The Annex containing questions for the identification of indicators to measure progress in achieving the Commitments was found to be most useful and practical, and country offices were encouraged to consider the indicators.

19. Some representatives suggested that the Commitments may need to be reformulated in order to make them more achievable. Others felt that the Commitments should be maintained, while more focused efforts may be required to achieve them. The Secretariat indicated that WFP would not revise the Commitments but rather look for ways to fine-tune and clarify them where required.
20. It was noted that greater attention should be paid to incorporating gender in the programming of WFP activities, in recognition that hunger and poverty cannot be effectively addressed without properly considering gender concerns. The Board stressed the need for women beneficiaries to be more closely involved in decision-making in WFP-assisted projects. A question was raised regarding the way WFP would define the strategic needs of women and incorporate them into the programming of its activities. The Secretariat explained that the inclusion of strategic needs of women would be further elaborated as part of the overall effort to mainstream gender into WFP programming.
21. The Board welcomed the increased share of women professional staff, although some representatives pointed out that there was still a need to place more women, including women from developing countries, at senior levels as well as in country offices. While agreeing on the importance of gender training, some representatives stressed the need for it to be adapted to realities in the field and to include gender capacity-building among government counterpart staff with a view to achieving a more positive appreciation of gender.
22. Attention was drawn to the substantial financial and human resources needed to achieve gender mainstreaming. Several representatives pointed out that gender activities should be funded from WFP's general (PSA) budget. Further discussions on this issue were expected to be undertaken at the Third Regular Session of the Board in the framework of deliberations on the biennial budget.
23. The Board raised a question on partnership with other United Nations agencies on gender issues. The Secretariat confirmed WFP's collaboration with several United Nations bodies, notably the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNICEF and the Inter-Agency Committee on Gender and Women's Equality (IACGWE). Gender concerns in complex emergencies are being clarified in the context of the Sub-Working Group of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) on Gender and Humanitarian Assistance.
24. Regarding the use of Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM), the Secretariat explained that, with the expected arrival of a new staff member, the Gender Unit of the Operations Division Technical Service would be more able to explore the use of VAM in processing gender-disaggregated data, and gender programming in general. On the alternative use of the terms 'gender equity' versus 'gender equality', the Secretariat noted that both terms were used in different contexts, as explained in the WFP Gender Glossary.



FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

Strategic and Financial Plan (2000–2003) (1999/EB.A/5)

25. The Board considered the Strategic and Financial Plan, 2000-2003 and the comments of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the FAO Finance Committee.
26. The Board appreciated the Strategic and Financial Plan as a clear report of WFP's progress in the priority areas set in the 1998-2001 Plan and the strategy, actions and financial projections proposed for the next four years. The Board commended the Secretariat on the transparent and inclusive process by which the Plan had been prepared, and on the quality of the document. The Board endorsed the ten priorities of the Strategic and Financial Plan.
27. Representatives commented on a range of aspects of the Plan. In particular, they noted:
- the increased results-orientation of the Plan and the actions to institutionalize a quantitative and qualitative results-based approach throughout WFP;
 - the implementation of the Organizational Change Initiative, the Board's decisions on food aid for development, the changes to Resource and Long-term Financing policies and the Financial Management Improvement Programme;
 - the need to ensure allocation of at least 50 percent of development expenditure to least developed countries (LDCs) and at least 90 percent to low-income, food-deficit countries (LIFDCs);
 - WFP partnerships with recipient governments, other agencies and NGOs;
 - WFP's active involvement in the United Nations Reform process and in the follow-up of the World Food Summit;
 - the advantages of multilateral contributions to WFP and the implications for governance by the Board; and
 - the difficulties in predicting accurately future resource levels.
28. The Board noted the concern of several representatives about the delays in providing donor reports and the Secretariat's assurance that this situation would be rectified as soon as possible. The concern of the Latin America and Caribbean Region's members that only one Country Strategy Outline (CSO) or Country Programme was planned for consideration before the end of 2001 was noted; 11 CSOs and Country Programmes had previously been approved for countries in that region. The Secretariat assured the Board of its continuing commitment to all Regions.
29. Following the advice of the ACABQ, the Board requested that future Strategic and Financial Plan documents incorporate a review of progress made in implementing the recommendations of the Board and the advisory bodies.

Budgetary Performance Report for 1998 (1999/EB.A/6)

30. The Board noted that the Budgetary Performance Report for 1998 was an essential part of WFP's accountability to the Executive Board and made suggestions for certain improvements in the presentation of data on regional distribution of operations and expenditures.



31. The Board was informed about the receipt of a large additional donation of over one million tons of wheat and wheat products, for an estimated value of US\$ 389 million, and noted that the Executive Director had authorized the use of US\$ 12 million earned as indirect support costs against this additional contribution.
32. The Secretariat responded to questions about the balance of US\$ 12.5 million in Programme Support and Administrative (PSA) funds generated by the additional contribution and the impact of this balance on the indirect support cost rate for the next biennium, the level of WFP's liquidity, and the amount of food monetized in 1998.
33. Noting the comments of the United Nations Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) and the FAO Finance Committee, the Board expressed the need for some rationalization in the production of and cycles for reports of this nature and called for the matter to be taken up at the Bureau level.

Financial Management Improvement Programme (FMIP) (1999/EB.A/7)

34. The Secretariat introduced the document, prepared in response to the request of the Executive Board at its Third Regular Session of 1998, containing a proposal for full funding of the FMIP. The Board was informed that the proposal had been discussed by the FAO Finance Committee and had received the endorsement of the ACABQ. The Secretariat requested the Board to approve a grant of up to US\$ 16.6 million from the General Fund to complete FMIP.
35. The Board agreed that, provided sufficient funds were available in the General Fund, resources should be allocated to implement FMIP on the understanding that this should be done as cost effectively as possible. The Secretariat responded to questions on the General Fund and its current balance and informed the Board that the balance at 31 December 1998 was US\$ 61.8 million.
36. Reference was made to the delay in the submission of documentation which did not allow sufficient time for some members of the FAO Finance Committee to review the proposal thoroughly, although it was appreciated that the document was clear and concise.
37. The Board agreed with the recommendation to convert the advance of US\$ 10.0 million from the General Fund into a grant and to grant an additional US\$ 6.6 million from the General Fund to complete FMIP. The Board requested the Secretariat to maintain its high standards of prudence and caution, and to continue to seek additional voluntary contributions.

EVALUATION WORK PLAN: 1999–2000

Evaluation Work Plan: 1999–2000 (1999/EB.A/8)

38. The Board made a number of suggestions for refining the approach proposed in the Evaluation Work Plan: 1999–2000.
39. The menu of indicators to be prepared should be focused and realistic, and could start with nutrition indicators, which are straightforward to design and apply. Representatives stressed the need to associate closely Country Programme evaluations with the preparation of Country Strategy Outlines and Country Programme documents.



40. There was concern about the reduction in the number of development projects to be evaluated. The Secretariat clarified that the number of individual development projects had been reduced, but that the six Country Programme evaluations planned would also review development activities in a more thematic manner.
41. The Board called for the Office of Evaluation to continue to expand collaboration with other evaluation units in United Nations agencies and among bilateral donors.
42. To update the Board refinements in project design necessary for effective evaluation work, it was suggested that future progress reports on implementation of the Enabling Development strategy could include the number of new projects which have baseline information and indicators, and lists of indicators used. Where necessary, they could explain why baselines and indicators were problematic. The same could be done for the other two major programme areas—Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRRO) and Emergency Operations (EMOP).
43. The Board expressed concern regarding staffing constraints. The Secretariat explained that project, programme or thematic evaluation work had been accorded a higher priority and completed. Development of lessons learned or management feedback systems had been deferred to 1999. The need for an extended discussion within the Board on monitoring and evaluation methods and principles was noted.
44. Some representatives were of the view that the issue of graduation or handover should not be forgotten in evaluation. Explaining the need for a very flexible country-specific approach to the handover of programmes to host governments, the Secretariat indicated that this theme would be considered in future work plans.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Report of the Working Group on the Distribution of Seats of the Executive Board (1999/EB.A/9)

45. The President of the Board and Chairperson of the Working Group on the Distribution of Seats introduced the Report of the Working Group and informed representatives that the parallel working groups in Rome and New York had reached a consensus position in March 1999. ECOSOC endorsed the draft resolution based on that consensus position, and subsequently forwarded the proposal to the General Assembly. The General Assembly approved the amendment to Appendix B of WFP's General Regulations on 7 April 1999.
46. The President reported to the Board that a similar process must be followed in Rome, by sending the draft resolution to the FAO Council for endorsement and onward transmission to the FAO Conference for approval. If approved, the new distribution of seats would enter into effect on 1 January 2000.
47. The Board commended the Working Group and its Chairperson for the fruitful negotiations and thanked all members of the Working Group for their spirit of compromise and dedication, which had permitted the achievement of a consensus position.



ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGERIAL MATTERS

Report on Post-delivery Losses for the Period 1 October 1997–30 September 1998 (1999/EB.A/10)

48. The Board considered the Report on Post-delivery Losses for the Period 1 October 1997–30 September 1998. In reply to queries raised by the Board, the Secretariat agreed that the statement, indicating that the canned fish loss in Cape Verde was due to inadequate packaging, was premature as the loss was still under investigation.
49. The Inspector-General reported on investigations into losses and loss prevention initiatives. The Secretariat expanded on issues raised by representatives and informed the Board that while the report only contained actual recoveries, negotiations to recover US\$ 2.5 million from the Ethiopia/Eritrea loss were expected to be successful and to reduce both the loss reported and the overall losses sustained.

Composition of WFP International Professional Staff and Higher Categories—Personnel Statistics Report (1999/EB.A/11)

50. The Board expressed appreciation for the Report on the Composition of WFP International Professional Staff and Higher Categories presented by the Human Resources Division, particularly for the frank and open approach to recruitment issues. Several representatives welcomed WFP's efforts to achieve gender equity and geographical distribution in the professional grades and higher categories, and encouraged WFP to continue its efforts to achieve its objectives in this area. The need to recruit more staff members from economically developing countries, especially women, was noted by several representatives.
51. Some representatives raised the issue of quotas. The Executive Director explained that WFP is a voluntarily funded agency and quotas cannot be applied. Recognizing that more should be done to recruit women from economically developing countries, the Executive Director stressed that all WFP managers are sensitive to the issue of equitable geographical distribution and reassured the Board that all candidates hired by WFP meet the right standards of competence and efficiency.

Report on Common Premises (1999/EB.A/12)

52. Some representatives raised questions concerning the Report on Common Premises and received clarifications on the flexibility mechanism foreseen in implementing the United Nations House programme, which takes into account that WFP activities might focus on development or emergency programmes. The Board emphasized that the security environment of the proposed site for the United Nations House must be one of the key selection criteria.
53. Representatives noted with appreciation the benefits which could be generated from the synergy between the Common Premises and the Common Services Programme. Questions were raised about the cost-saving expectations of the Programme, although this should not be the only criterion for WFP's participation.
54. The concept of the virtual United Nations House was suggested as an option.



55. In response to comments regarding the financial implications of implementing the United Nations House programme, it was generally acknowledged that the budgetary aspect should be addressed at the Third Regular Session of 1999.

OTHER BUSINESS

Update on WFP Operations in the Balkan Countries

56. The Board commended WFP for the timely and efficient way in which it had responded to the refugee crisis in Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYRoM). Several representatives supported the plan to open a WFP regional office in Skopje; others commended WFP's initiative to use local bakeries, thereby supporting the local economy.
57. One representative, noting the intensive press coverage, mentioned that although the present crisis deserved donors' support, it was important to remember that WFP operations in other Regions were equally in need of assistance.
58. The Secretariat clarified that the allocation of food commodities among the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), FYRoM and Albania was based on the actual numbers as determined by UNHCR, and that generally speaking the food was delivered to people in need, wherever they were.
59. One representative queried the material support being provided to host families. Another asked whether the same food basket was provided to all refugees. The Secretariat informed the Board that different food baskets were offered by NGOs. In Albania, an agreement had been reached for the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to provide food to host families and for WFP to provide food to all refugees, including those living with host families. As to WFP's plans to transport and distribute food in Kosovo, the Secretariat advised that there were ongoing humanitarian missions, the results of which were awaited. One member noted that the recent armed conflict in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had severely affected the agricultural and food security situation in the region.

Update on WFP Operations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

60. The Secretariat presented an update on WFP operations in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and informed the Board of the small-scale pilot PRRO envisaged as part of WFP's future strategy.
61. One member who had participated in the recent donor mission to DPRK commented on the continued need for humanitarian assistance, the vulnerability of urban workers, the need for a more broadly based donor support and the need for balanced resourcing of all food basket commodities.
62. The Board supported the PRRO initiative, as well as the need for increased transparency and better access to areas of WFP operation by the DPRK Government, and encouraged WFP to promote policy change in dialogue with the Government. Some members expressed concern about lack of policy changes by the Government to ensure a sustainable long-term solution to its food security crises.
63. The representative of the recipient country thanked WFP and its donors for their support.



Resource Mobilization Strategy (1999/EB.A/13)

64. The Board noted the Information Note on the Resource Mobilization Strategy, which outlines a process and timetable for consultation with members on developing a Resource Mobilization Strategy for WFP. This consultative and participatory exercise has already begun, with the Secretariat preparing an internal review of WFP's strengths and weaknesses in the area of resource mobilization. The process is scheduled to be concluded by May 2000.

Report of the Working Group on Governance (1999/EB.A/14)

65. The Chairperson of the Working Group on Governance informed the Board of progress achieved by the Group since its establishment on 11 March 1999. One substantive meeting had been held on 14 April 1999, and a progress report had been distributed by the Secretariat on 5 May 1999. A second meeting of the Working Group was scheduled for Friday, 21 May 1999.

66. He reported that the consultants assisting the Working Group were well advanced in the identification of issues to be addressed. They were in the process of carrying out interviews with Board members and observers, as well as with Executive Staff of WFP. Further interviews were planned with representatives of United Nations organizations. The consultants were also reviewing literature on governance to determine what lessons could be drawn.

67. Informal briefings of the various electoral lists, if they so wished, would be held at the end of June or beginning of July 1999; these would be followed by an Issues and Options paper, expected to be available by the end of July. Work would resume in September, when the Group would move into a phase of consultations on the issues and options presented in the paper. Recommendations would follow, to be presented to the Board at its Annual Session of 2000.

68. The President thanked the Chairperson for the information provided and commended the Working Group for its efforts.

