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**Executive Board
Annual Session**

Rome, 27 - 29 May 1997

INFORMATION NOTE ON WFP HEADQUARTERS



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NOTE BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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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.

The WFP focal points for this document are:

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Should you have any questions regarding matters of dispatch of documentation for the Executive Board, please contact the Documentation and Meetings Clerk (tel.: 5228-2641).



BACKGROUND

1. Following the recommendation that WFP seek alternative premises for its headquarters, made by the Executive Board at its Second Regular Session in May 1996, WFP has actively searched for and viewed over 30 buildings in various stages of construction and refurbishment. Of these, only two buildings were deemed to be suitable in terms of size, location and basic facilities. One, purportedly belonging to a parastatal body, Ente Poste, is located in EUR; the other is owned privately and is situated in Parco dei Medici, along the highway to Fiumicino Airport.
2. In September 1996, prior to the identification of the Ente Poste building, a submission was made by the Secretariat to the Italian Government to discuss the lease of the Parco dei Medici building. In response to the Government's request, building plans were submitted to the Italian Representation in November 1996. Discussions with the Italian Government on the Ente Poste building began at the end of September 1996, when the building was initially identified by WFP. The President of IFAD, the Permanent Representative of Italy to WFP and the Executive Director of WFP visited the building on 9 October 1996.
3. At its Third Regular Session in October 1996, the Executive Board instructed WFP to move out of its current unsuitable premises by the end of 1997. The Executive Director and the Secretary-General of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs met on 27 January 1997 in order to discuss the urgency of the situation. It was agreed that the two buildings should be reviewed simultaneously by the appropriate authorities and that the availability of the Ente Poste building in particular would be confirmed by the end of February 1997. The Secretary-General assured the Executive Director of his personal attention to the issue and to its resolution within the time frame set by the Executive Board. The President of the Executive Board met separately with the Secretary-General in March 1997 on the same subject. WFP's need for suitable headquarters premises was also brought to the attention of the Italian authorities by the United Nations Secretary-General during his visit to Rome in mid-April 1997. The Italian authorities reiterated the same assurances given to the Executive Director.
4. At the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board in March 1997, the Secretariat was advised verbally that the Ente Poste building would not be available for WFP. At this point, the Parco dei Medici building appeared to be the only option for alternative WFP headquarters.
5. In April 1997, WFP received the report of the consulting engineers who had been commissioned to make a preliminary study of the building, its machinery and plants. In brief, the engineers found the premises to be in good condition and suitable for accommodating WFP. As the building is not purpose-built, several alterations and upgrading works will need to be undertaken in order to meet WFP's special requirements. These include the separation of one of the four towers in the complex, which exceeds WFP's needs. Other major works involve alterations to the air-conditioning system to comply with European Union standards that will come into force in 1998, upgrading of the electrical plants, cabling for the LAN, and other changes. These works, which are expected to take 10 to 12 months to complete, are estimated to cost around 3.5 million dollars. A significant proportion of the cost of engineering and structural works is likely to be chargeable to the owner of the building.



PRESENT STATUS

6. In a letter to the Executive Director, the Permanent Representative of Italy to WFP advised on 19 May 1997 that the Italian authorities had approved the proposal to lease the Parco dei Medici building as WFP's headquarters.
7. On receipt of this approval, WFP initiated discussions with the owners of the building on terms of rental and on the engineering and structural works required to upgrade the building. WFP has also commenced a detailed assessment of necessary renovation works to meet WFP's special needs, and of furnishing requirements. These costs are expected to be borne by the Government of Italy under the provisions of the Headquarters Agreement (similar to the manner in which such items are provided to FAO and IFAD).
8. Therefore, upon successful negotiation with the building owners, the Executive Director would plan a move of WFP headquarters staff as soon as feasible. At this point, the first quarter of 1998 would be the estimated time.
9. The Executive Board will continue to receive regular updates on this matter until the move is complete.

