

**Informal Note for the Record of the Joint Informal Meeting of the FAO Council,  
IFAD Executive Board and WFP Executive Board**

**15 September 2017**

**Chaired by the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council**

1. The **Chair** welcomed the three heads of the Rome-based agencies (RBAs), the President of the WFP Executive Board and all participants to what he said was the historic first informal meeting of the RBA governing bodies, which was being held at the request of the three governing bodies to establish a forum for discussion and an interactive dialogue on broad and long-term collaboration between the three organizations. The meeting, like others to follow, was to serve as an adjunct to other, formal, processes and would be informal in nature; no record or outcome paper would be produced. During initial discussions it had been suggested that such an informal meeting be held on an annual basis, with the venue rotating among the RBAs. He also recalled that the governing bodies of the RBAs had considered a joint paper in 2016 and 2017 that outlined suggested priority areas for collaboration; an update of that paper was being prepared. In closing he suggested that, because of their differing governing structures, regional setups in the field and other factors, the RBAs would understandably face challenges in collaborating and that it would take time for their collaboration to reach its full potential.
2. The meeting participants then viewed a short video on the joint field visit of the three RBA principals to Ethiopia.
3. The **FAO Director-General**, recalling that the idea of periodic joint meetings of the three governing bodies had been discussed with the previous WFP Executive Director and former IFAD President, said that this first meeting marked the beginning of a new tradition of interagency dialogue and that the three RBA principals agreed fully on the importance of collaboration by their agencies, particularly with the aim of avoiding duplication. Such collaboration, he added, was closely followed by other United Nations entities. The three principals enjoyed an excellent relationship, which had been reinforced by their trip to Ethiopia and was demonstrated by the fact that each had spoken in the name of the others at recent international forums, including the recent meeting of the Group of 20; that would happen again at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, he said.
4. Increased focus on RBA collaboration was already encouraging donors to fund joint programmes, such as a USD 38 million contribution by Canada for projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger and Somalia. Joint programmes presented a great opportunity to take full advantage of the complementarity of the RBAs, he said. Efforts had also been made to speak with one voice in pursuit of resource mobilization, including through a joint statement to the High-level Political Forum and joint press releases and statements on natural disasters. Important steps had also been taken on knowledge sharing, for example with WFP and FAO presenting joint data on food insecurity in crises to the Security Council. The President of the Security Council had emphasized that such information was an invaluable tool for understanding and moving forward to resolve such crises. The updated joint paper to be presented in the following weeks would present additional examples of collaboration.
5. With this first meeting, he concluded, a seed had been planted, and it was important to wait for the tree to grow and bear fruit. Time and patience were needed to achieve full RBA collaboration.

6. The President of **IFAD** said that the current meeting was a great opportunity to reflect on the joint work of the RBAs. Outlining the field visit to Ethiopia that the three RBA principals had made together with representatives of Member States, he said that it had mainly taken place in the Tigray and Somali regions. In Tigray they had seen the impact of long-term investment, where collaboration by the RBAs had worked particularly well, with WFP providing nutrition support, FAO helping farmers to develop food nurseries and improve livelihoods and IFAD providing financing for irrigation projects. As for Somali, it was enduring a long period of drought and receiving humanitarian assistance.
7. The visit clearly showed the complementarity of the activities of the RBAs. Not everything was positive or systematic, but overall it was working well. To be effective and achieve maximum impact, he suggested, joint projects required clear linkages between the various activities being implemented and a systematic approach in planning and execution. Collaboration with other key actors from the United Nations system and other international financial institutions was also fundamental. The RBAs were striving to improve in all these areas and had asked the teams in the field to proceed to map activities being carried out and to develop an action plan for RBA collaboration.
8. He concluded by saying that the success of any RBA project also depended on the responsiveness of local and national authorities. While the RBAs might not be in full agreement with the approaches taken by those authorities, it was important to provide the requested support.
9. The **WFP Executive Director** highlighted the value of RBA collaboration with an African proverb: “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to far, go together”. The recent joint field visit had been magnificent, he said, boding well for RBA cooperation. RBA Member States also needed to cooperate and collaborate, however, so that real change could be achieved with the limited resources that were available.
10. The success of the RBAs had been remarkable, with millions fewer hungry people over the last decade, despite world population growth. The number of hungry people was going up again, however, while 60 percent of WFP beneficiaries, 75 percent of stunted children and 80 percent of WFP expenditures were in conflict areas. History had shown several examples of countries that had moved from being beneficiaries of food assistance to becoming donors, and he expressed the hope that as many others as possible would soon be able to do the same.
11. The joint projects implemented by the RBAs had steadily increased in number, reaching 205 in 2016. In the Tigray region of Ethiopia, site of the recent field visit, a WFP food for assets project had rendered 1.2 million hectares of land usable for agriculture; that had then been complemented by investment from IFAD to support an irrigation project and supplemented by FAO through a project providing seeds to farmers. As a result of this joint effort, he said, the region was no longer dependent, and the work there should serve as a model to be replicated. In the Somali region drought was a recurrent issue, and it was necessary to review how the RBAs were cooperating and how other institutions could be called upon to help. Of the 5 million people in the region, some 3.3 million were receiving food daily, and if food security was not addressed then conflict might arise. Many beneficiaries wanted to stay in the region and to contribute to bringing change to their communities.
12. Many other countries and regions, he continued, presented tremendous opportunities for the RBAs to work together, including Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Latin America. The goal of reaching zero hunger would not be reachable if human-caused conflict persisted. The RBAs would do their part and would work together, but with unprecedented numbers of wars and other tragedies in many regions support and action from Member States was also crucial.
13. The RBAs, he said, supported the United Nations reform initiative promoted by the Secretary-General, which would enhance flexibility and resilience. He concluded by highlighting again the

collaborative atmosphere in which the joint field visit to Ethiopia had taken place, and he called for the continuation of that spirit of cooperation among the three RBAs.

14. The **Chair** then opened the floor for questions and answers, indicating that he would first give the floor to three members who had participated in the joint field trip to Ethiopia, followed by the members of the governing bodies and, time permitting, by observers.
15. The representative of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** said that the meeting was an excellent opportunity to reflect informally on the joint activities of the RBAs and to send a powerful message to both Member States and staff members about the determination of the RBAs to deepen collaboration. The joint trip to Ethiopia had shown what collaboration could achieve, particularly in the case of the Tigray region. She also applauded the key leadership role played by the Government. As far as the Somali region was concerned, she had been encouraged by the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister during the visit and by his indication that the Government would support water management projects.
16. She also said that more importance should be given to communicating about collaboration. While collaboration could be very challenging in complex areas, it should be pursued at all levels, including policy setting, planning and evaluation, and it should not only focus on the implementation of new projects, but should also lead to new resourcing and new areas of complementarity so that the RBAs could better work together towards zero hunger.
17. Echoing his colleague from the United Kingdom, the representative of the **Netherlands** said that he had been impressed with what he had seen during the joint field visit, and he thanked the teams on the ground for an excellent example of real collaboration and expressed appreciation for the commitments of the principals of the three organizations. The Tigray region, he said, was an excellent example of what the RBAs could achieve: communities there could feed themselves thanks to their support. It was also necessary, however, for those communities to be able to reach markets and to export their production, and for that the private sector would be needed. In the Somali region the effects of drought had been devastating. The main problem was water management, critical to food security and rebuilding the rural economy. Projects implemented to date had not yielded solutions.
18. The field visit had sent a real message of hope, but massive investment was needed. It would not be enough to work jointly, and it would be necessary to provide greater support. It had been very useful to see how collaboration worked on the ground, and further advocacy work should be undertaken, for example through the video that had been produced, and collaboration with the private sector and NGOs and other partners needed to be broadened.
19. The representative of the **United States of America** said that the joint paper presented to the governing bodies in 2016 had shown that the 2030 Agenda was a great opportunity for RBA collaboration but also represented a challenge. While countries had a wide range of partners within and beyond the United Nations system, the RBAs should be their partners of choice. The RBAs should avoid collaboration for its own sake; joint projects should make sense from an operational point of view, with the role of each RBA clearly defined, should respect each RBA's mandate and structure and should not involve any additional or superfluous structures or requirements. The United States would host a side event at the forthcoming session of the General Assembly to present a declaration on United Nations reform. RBA collaboration provided an excellent example of how to reduce mandate duplication and redundancy across United Nations organizations. He concluded by saying that the United States would maintain its support for meaningful reform and for the RBAs.
20. Expressing support for the statement by the representative of the United Kingdom, the representative of the **Dominican Republic** highlighted a conversation that the field visit participants had had with farmers from a cooperative in Tigray, during which the farmers had indicated that the rural exodus of people from the region had ceased and that families were returning to work on small-scale farming

activities. He indicated that the local Government had been monitoring the situation closely and confirmed that the migratory flow had indeed been reversed.

21. The representative of **Italy** said that his country was proud to be the host of the RBAs, which were providing the building blocks with which to achieve zero hunger. He also said that the Committee on World Food Security played an important role regarding food security issues. Hunger, food insecurity and nutrition, he concluded, were not as high on the international agenda as they should be, and RBA collaboration would be key to drawing greater attention to them.
22. The representative of **Germany** said that the current meeting provided a good platform for reflecting on joint activities and should be repeated annually. He commended the principals of the RBAs for their recent joint field visit, saying that it had provided an excellent example of collaboration, which should be a standing item on the agendas of the RBA governing bodies and a matter of importance not just to the RBAs but also to other partners.
23. His country supported the declaration on United Nations reform presented by the United States, and the implementation of more joint activities by the RBAs would be a good step in support of such reform. Holding the current meeting annually, he concluded, should not imply a new governing role but should rather lead to greater involvement by Member States to promote a common understanding of RBA activities. It could be useful, he suggested, to focus the discussions during the meetings on specific topics or regions.
24. The representative of **Japan** said that RBA collaboration was a key element in articulating the humanitarian–development nexus of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and that enhancing cooperation would have a long-term impact on the livelihoods of populations. The joint visit to Ethiopia was a clear symbol that the RBAs had a shared mission, and the RBAs had to take the lead on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 2. In concluding, she said that that she was glad to see that there was a strong commitment to RBA collaboration.
25. The representative of **Afghanistan** highlighted the importance of the current meeting, indicating that there had been a preference for it to remain informal and to be repeated on an annual basis, with a duration of three hours. The meeting, he suggested, should enable the exchange of views on global issues of high priority, and the regional groups should be invited to propose topics for discussion, to be decided upon by the three principals. RBA collaboration was vital at the country level and should be reflected in FAO’s country programming frameworks, IFAD’s country strategic opportunities programmes and WFP’s country strategic plans, which should all be based on the same sources and policies and the same country parameters. He concluded by saying that RBA collaboration should also be reflected at the subregional, regional and global levels and that the complementarity of the three organizations should be built into their strategic goals, objectives and outcomes.
26. The representative of **China** said that the principals of the RBAs had infused their organizations with a new spirit of cooperation and that the current meeting marking a new start for RBA collaboration, which was aligned with the orientation Secretary-General’s proposals for United Nations reform. More importance should be given to the substantive results obtained through RBA collaboration and to building joint demonstration projects. South-South cooperation should also be an integral part of RBA collaboration activities, and the progress to date was creating great expectations in developing countries.
27. In response to the above statements, the **FAO Director-General** said that cooperation was progressing more rapidly in the field than at headquarters, mainly due to the fact that the RBAs were traditional organizations with bureaucracies that required time to adjust to change. Work had begun on the integration of IT systems, for example, but much remained to be done. The **President of IFAD** said that holding one joint informal meeting per year would be beneficial, as it would allow for dialogue between the governing bodies; it should not, however, result in another layer of governance.

The **Executive Director of WFP** said that the RBAs had plenty of opportunities to collaborate at the headquarters level and that managers were being encouraged to foster discussion on joint activities. It was time for tangible RBA collaboration in Rome while the collaboration at the local level continued.

28. The **Chair** reopened the floor for comments by members.
29. The representative of the **European Union** inquired about how the work had been proceeding with the update of the joint paper and how RBA collaboration was to be presented to the United Nations General Assembly. He also asked if any plans had yet been made for field visits to other countries.
30. The representative of **Switzerland** said that while the RBAs were primarily requested to provide joint expertise to countries they should also foster the discussion of policies at the national level. Much data and knowledge had been produced by the RBAs, he said, and he asked how they could be used to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Finally, he suggested that consideration be given to how the tools that had been developed by the Committee on World Food Security could be used by the RBAs.
31. Speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, the representative of **Finland** welcomed the idea of joint meetings on RBA collaboration, which should be seen as an additional initiative for achieving efficiencies as well as a channel for incorporating activities aimed at strengthening gender equality. Future meetings should also integrate joint assessments and evaluations of activities and should include other partners from the United Nations system and the private sector. RBA collaboration represented an opportunity to enhance the use of scarce resources. In closing, she said that the Committee on World Food Security should remain the main platform for supporting the elaboration of policies related to food security.
32. The representative of **Bangladesh** said that to produce better results the RBAs should establish a joint programme in each country where they operated before starting work in the field. He also said that joint field visits of the governing bodies should be organized and appealed to donors to fund joint initiatives of the RBAs.
33. The representative of **Ireland** said that the RBAs were at a turning point in a challenging funding environment and that it was important for members of the governing bodies to be able to keep their capitals informed of the initiatives and activities taking place through joint RBA projects. It was fundamental to ensure that collaboration took place at all levels of the organizations. Saying that some of the SDGs such as goals 4 and 16 required long-term solutions and that education played a key role, he expressed the hope that RBA collaboration would become a standing item on the agendas for the meetings of the governing bodies and that relevant initiatives, including on education, would be considered. Finally, he called upon donors to provide funding for RBA collaboration projects.
34. The representative of **Brazil** said that the current meeting was a first step towards regular meetings, which should be held on an annual basis. The joint participation of the principals at international meetings, he said, was key to showcasing the collaboration among the organizations. He also called for further joint field visits to be organized for members. He concluded by saying that RBA collaboration was an excellent example that should inform the discussions on proposals for United Nations reform.
35. The **Chair** thanked the principals and all members for their comments and apologized to those representatives – those of Argentina, Canada, Egypt, Eritrea, France, Mexico and the Islamic Republic of Iran – who had been prevented from speaking by time constraints, inviting them to submit their statements in writing. He then passed the floor to the President of the WFP Executive Board for closing remarks.

36. On behalf of the members of the governing bodies, the **President of the WFP Executive Board** thanked the secretariats of the RBAs for arranging the meeting, which he said had been an invigorating opportunity to demonstrate, through very clear examples of successful RBA collaboration in the field, how the RBAs had been working together to eliminate hunger and food insecurity and to promote sustainable agriculture development. The examples, he said, showed that RBA collaboration had amazing potential to contribute to the full realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.
37. He then expressed the hope that, while the governing bodies might wish to adjust the meeting format and agenda, the current meeting would be repeated each year. He also announced that a communication was soon to be distributed in relation to the launch of a new website that would provide detailed information on RBA collaboration and help to showcase the joint activities of the three organizations.
38. In concluding, he thanked all participants and adjourned the meeting.