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Programme
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World
Food
Programme

Programa
Mundial
de Alimentos

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SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE THIRD REGULAR SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD



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SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE MEETING



Biennial accounts 1994-95 - Report of the External Auditor (1996/EB.3/2)

1. The biennial accounts for 1994-95 were presented for the Board's approval which, to the understanding of the Secretariat, was necessary in order to transfer the surplus to the Operational Reserve. With reference to the surplus, the Secretariat sought confirmation from the Board of its interpretation of the decision of the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA) at its Thirty-eighth Session, as provided in paragraphs 19 and 20 of the Executive Director's statement. The Secretariat had proposed devoting 20 million dollars of the surplus to a special provision towards after-service medical coverage. A complete proposal for full coverage of after-service medical accrued benefits would be presented to the next session of the Board. It could, however, already be asserted that not providing now a substantial amount for this coverage would result in increased indirect support costs in the future. The Executive Director's statement, always finalized before the final audit report is received, was not meant to be an answer to the External Auditor's recommendations; a specific report would be provided. Complying with the External Auditor's recommendation with respect to internal transport, storage and handling (ITSH) would result in showing surpluses which are not at the disposal of the Programme or the donors, but earmarked for future expenditure. This would be considered in the context of the accounting policy on income and expenditure recognition. Many recommendations of the External Auditor had been addressed; user manuals for information systems had been issued or were being finalized; the reporting backlog of country offices had been eliminated, their cash holdings reduced by 60 percent in the first nine months of 1996, and 14 offices were transmitting accounting data via electronic transfer. A Memorandum of Understanding on Treasury Operations had been signed with FAO.
2. The Board commended the report of the External Auditor and its very useful recommendations as well as the presentation of the Financial Statements in a new format. The report raised some concern and a status report was requested for the next session. There was also concurrence on the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on the simplification of the process of accounts approval.
3. One representative acknowledged the actions taken so far, but said it was clear that more was needed without waiting for the finalization of the Financial Management Improvement Plan (FMIP). The Board should stay vigilant in ensuring that WFP had adequate financial controls in place and a sufficient number of confident, properly trained professionals to account for its resources. WFP should respect the decision of the CFA to place any surplus into the Operational Reserve; once fully funded, residual funds could be transferred to the Immediate Response Account (IRA).
4. Another representative concurred with the interpretation of the Secretariat on the surplus; he wanted to know about the origin of the surplus, which would be relevant to a decision in respect of the balance.
5. Concern was expressed by one representative on funds committed for development being used for emergencies. The IRA was a category to which countries should contribute directly; if every country contributed proportionally to its GNP, the IRA would be totally funded.



6. The need for human development and to have sufficient skilled staff when undertaking operations was emphasized.
7. It was stressed that country offices should avail themselves of efficient management tools before any further transfer of responsibilities. Furthermore, countries had great expectations on WFP support to monetization operations which are an important part of the assistance provided to recipient countries.
8. It was pointed out that when the Operational Reserve is filled, available resources should be used for development. Problems in procurement should not limit the Programme to buy only half of its commodities from developing countries.
9. The Director of the Finance and Information Systems Division pointed out that staffing was being strengthened, in line with the statements of several representatives. However, when financial services were provided by UNDP, country offices did not necessarily need WFP finance officers. He also explained that the surplus stemmed from income from interest and government cash counterpart contributions (GCCC) in excess of those budgeted, unexpected totally untied contributions as well as net savings from the PSA budget and transport costs. The Operational Reserve was a mechanism to finance WFP while awaiting receipt of confirmed contributions where the IRA had been established for the Programme to use funds for emergencies before any pledge. All Country Directors who visited headquarters had received a briefing and some training on financial matters since the recruitment of the Chief of Field Finance.
10. The Deputy Executive Director stated that the Executive Director placed great emphasis on accountability and it was in WFP's interest that the Auditor pointed out all the lacunae, so that they could be filled. One should, however, recognize where one came from and that it was very difficult for a Programme like WFP to make a dramatic change from one biennium to the next. Great improvements had been achieved, but the Secretariat was aware that much remained to be done.

Report of the work of the WFP Office of Inspection and Investigation (OEDI) (1996/EB.3/3)

11. The Board welcomed the report on the first 12 months' work of the WFP Office of Inspection and Investigation (OEDI). Representatives complimented the Office on the quality of the report and the good insight it gave into the problems uncovered, while necessarily respecting confidentiality.
12. Representatives requested that the next report describe some of the lessons learned. It was noted that some of those lessons might be of value to other United Nations organizations.
13. The deterrent effect and the assistance provided to management were discussed, and it was considered that the value of those outputs could be far greater than the monies recovered by the Office.
14. The Board requested the Secretariat to send a copy of the report, together with its comments, to the United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS).



Report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on the follow-up to its resolution 1995/56 - Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (1996/EB.3/4)

15. The Board commended the Secretariat on an interesting paper which addressed the requirements of the resolution. The Executive Director sought guidance from the Board on the proposals and follow-up action set out in the document. She articulated WFP's intent not to redefine its mandate but rather, in the spirit of reform of the United Nations and a meaningful response to the resolution, to find areas of comparative advantage to offer to other parts of the United Nations system in order to strengthen its capacity.
16. Several representatives cautioned WFP on undertaking new roles which might affect its ability to fulfil its core mandate.
17. While some representatives recognized WFP's comparative advantage and involvement in providing transport and logistic services and infrastructure improvement projects, the issue was to what extent the Programme should be involved in that area. They wished to have more information on the capacity implications of assuming a larger role. Some representatives suggested that WFP use the private sector as much as possible in providing transport and logistic services. Another concern was the need for a timely handing over of infrastructure improvement projects to development agencies and local governments to ensure long-term support and sustainability. In response to some of these concerns, the Secretariat pointed out that no extra costs were foreseen in assuming transport and logistic services on behalf of other humanitarian actors. Often there was no other agency with the capacity to undertake such activities. Other representatives encouraged WFP to continue providing its services to the United Nations system.
18. A number of representatives indicated that it was premature to take a decision on WFP's role in addressing food aid needs of economic emergencies arising during the transition period of the implementation of the GATT/Uruguay Trade Agreement, as that issue was being addressed in other fora, i.e., the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Food Aid Committee. Others supported WFP's proposal. In any case, the Board noted that this proposal needed further elaboration and study.
19. The Secretariat offered the following clarification. The proposal was made in the spirit of preparedness and how WFP could respond rapidly in the event of an "economic emergency". WFP's proposal was limited to those cases where targeted food aid was needed. WFP and the International Emergency Food Reserve (IEFR) had proven capacity. Least developed and low-income, food-deficit countries did not have a strong say in the Food Aid Committee, which was a donor forum, nor were they strongly represented in other fora such as WTO's Committee on Agriculture, where that issue was being discussed. It was also an open question whether the WFP Executive Board would be the appropriate forum in which to initiate negotiations to establish the level of food aid commitments sufficient to meet the legitimate needs of developing countries during the reform programme. This would, however, be consistent with the powers and functions of the Executive Board, should it choose to exercise them in such a way.
20. The Board noted that enhanced inter-agency coordination, including through developing or refining written agreements on working arrangements, was an important means of addressing gaps in the system. The Board focused in particular on WFP's relationship with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). It encouraged cooperation with FAO on essential agricultural inputs and the finalization of the revision of the Memorandum of



Understanding (MOU) with UNHCR, particularly resolving the question of WFP's responsibility with respect to UNHCR on food distribution to refugees.

21. The Board stressed the importance of WFP's dual mandate in emergency and development assistance as its unique strength, and of maintaining an appropriate balance between relief and development, i.e., not losing sight of the importance of development activities for eliminating poverty, preventing disasters and forming the basis for WFP's emergency response.
22. The Board appreciated WFP's endeavours to develop indicators to measure performance and improve targeting. It appreciated and supported the internal efforts of WFP to strengthen its capacity, especially as regards developing the management and technical skills of its human resources. Additional delegation to the field in particular had a strong training implication. The Board also stressed the importance of common inter-agency training.
23. The Deputy Director-General of FAO mentioned current areas of effective cooperation with WFP with respect to joint approval of emergency food operations, joint food supply/food aid needs assessment missions, and exchange of information in the context of early warning activities. FAO agreed to the need to strengthen agreements with WFP on working arrangements for providing emergency assistance.
24. The Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) in Geneva briefed the Board on progress being made in sub-working groups of the ECOSOC Task Force established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in considering key issues for a coordinated inter-agency follow-up to the resolution. DHA noted that the issue of repayment of loans to the Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF) would be discussed in the context of the IASC.

Evaluations of protracted refugee and displaced person projects/operations (1996/EB.3/5)

Liberia Regional 4604 - Programme policy evaluation of the 1990-95 period of the WFP-assisted refugee and displaced person operations in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone

25. The discussion focused on the importance of improving coordination between WFP, UNHCR and NGOs, commodity tracking, targeting and the transition from emergency relief to targeted assistance. The need for relevant socio-economic and nutritional data was stressed. The Board urged the Secretariat to follow up on reviewing tripartite agreements for better programme coordination and to undertake appropriate audits, as well as establishing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system, involving well-defined selection criteria and indicators.

Afghanistan 5086 (Exp.2) - Relief and rehabilitation in Afghanistan

26. The Board recognized that recent events in Afghanistan did not allow for a realistic assessment of the relevance and/or follow-up to the recommendations of the evaluation report. While repatriation should be preferred whenever possible, the situation should be reassessed in early 1997, by which time the effects of current activities might be better understood.



Desk evaluation of the Rwanda/Burundi emergency operation

27. The Board reiterated the need to pay sufficient attention to the pressure placed on host countries receiving refugees from Rwanda and Burundi. The Board also stressed the importance of improved contingency planning and preparedness, as well as coordination with other partners, including NGOs. The Secretariat was urged to become more involved in the monitoring of the final distribution of commodities.

Thematic evaluation of WFP-assisted projects for the urban poor in Eastern Africa (1996/EB.3/6)

28. The discussion focused on the sustainability of project activities and the role of such projects in contributing to longer-term solutions of the root causes of urban poverty. Despite the problems encountered to date in implementing projects for the urban poor, the Executive Board recommended continuation of such projects, provided that due attention was given to improving coordination with other donors and monitoring project effects soundly.

Interim evaluation of development project Madagascar 3936 - Support to primary education (1996/EB.3/7)

29. The Board stressed the importance of integrating the school feeding project into the national education programme, while also ensuring that there was sufficient coordination with other complementary projects and programmes. While recognizing that the recommendations of the evaluation report revealed the level of need in the country, the Board urged the Secretariat to integrate those recommendations and lessons learned from other school feeding projects into the design of the new phase of the project.

Country Strategy Outlines - General discussion (1996/EB.3/8)

30. The Board expressed interest in learning more about the criteria used in determining how and when countries are considered for a Country Programme. The Secretariat advised that the decision to proceed with a Country Programme is normally based on: a) the country's classification as least developed; and b) expressed interest of national governments. Country Programmes would not be developed in countries: a) which are in the midst of long, complex emergencies with no foreseeable possibilities for rehabilitation; or b) where there is only one project or where the resource level is so low that it does not justify the effort of preparing a Country Programme.
31. The Board suggested that, in order to conform with United Nations General Assembly resolution 50/120, Country Strategy Outlines (CSOs) highlight the national priorities of governments and their relationship to Country Strategy Notes (CSNs) by making reference to these issues at the beginning of the document.

Country Strategy Outline - Bhutan (1996/EB.3/9)

32. The Board noted with appreciation the CSO for Bhutan and agreed in particular with the emphasis given to education. In respect of the construction of forestry feeder roads, the need for a comprehensive management plan was emphasized. In that connection, the Board noted WFP's intention to collaborate with other donors or agencies that would provide technical support. The Board further agreed that WFP food assistance should be utilized to support the Government in hiring unskilled labour. The discussion also highlighted the need to continue the dialogue with the Government for the eventual phase-out of WFP food



assistance. The Board did not see the need for the Secretariat to prepare a separate country programme for Bhutan; it considered it sufficient to approve the development projects on the basis of the CSO.

Country Strategy Outline - Cambodia (1996/EB.3/10)

33. The Board appreciated the CSO for Cambodia and the challenging role assumed by WFP. The following specific aspects were emphasized: a) the need to prioritize various interventions according to government priorities and capacity; b) the importance of the land-mine issue; c) the desirability of expanding WFP assistance to the health sector (in particular the tuberculosis programme); and d) the importance of increasing the developmental impact of the programme. The Board also noted the specific role WFP had assumed in poverty mapping.

Country Strategy Outline - Ghana (1996/EB.3/11)

34. The need to improve the targeting of beneficiaries and to integrate the strategy into a wider framework, harmonized with the interventions of other donors, especially United Nations agencies, was stressed. The strategy should also take into account the decentralization policy being implemented by the Government of Ghana, with increased participation of local administrations and NGOs in the planning and execution of projects. Concerning the appropriateness of food aid, the Board was informed that the strategy had been discussed with the Government, which had given its commitment to implement it. Greater involvement of women and girls in future WFP-assisted projects was stressed.

Country Strategy Outline - Tajikistan (1996/EB.3/12)

35. The document (WFP/EB.3/96/6/Add.5) was described as giving an accurate picture of the situation in Tajikistan. There was agreement with the direction of the activities, including the need to continue relief distributions in tandem with rehabilitation and development efforts.
36. The Secretariat noted that for 1997 about 12 percent of the total programme was planned for rehabilitation (4,000 tons out of around 30,000 tons).
37. WFP was expected to coordinate its efforts in agricultural development with “larger specialists” (e.g., the World Bank, FAO and Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States and Georgia (TACIS)) when they became operational.

Country Strategy Outline - Yemen (1996/EB.3/13)

38. The Board expressed its satisfaction with the strategy presented and made the following recommendations for proceeding with the design of a Country Programme:
- a) Specific ways should be identified to ensure and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women, and to ensure that communities will be fully involved in the planning and implementation of activities.
 - b) For each activity, a precise indication should be given of the yearly inputs and allocations of the host country.
 - c) Due consideration should be given to “Key issues and risks” (paragraphs 117 to 120, WFP/EB.3/96/6/Add.4).



- d) A realistic approach should be taken on soil and water conservation and the expectations for food production; low-cost water conservation and afforestation should be planned; and more attention should be given to disaster prevention.
- e) Public information activities should be undertaken, to encourage parents to enrol and keep girls in school.

Country Programmes - General Discussion (1996/EB.3/14)

- 39. The Board noted the useful contribution that the preparation of WFP Country Programmes could make in strengthening the process of preparing Country Strategy Notes.
- 40. The Board recommended that Country Programmes focus on the rationale for providing food to the recipient country and urged that their relevance to national priorities and other United Nations agencies' programmes be specified.
- 41. The Board expressed concern over the decreasing availability of resources for development activities and eventual over-commitments for Country Programmes and projects. It highlighted the need to be fully informed on programme/project requirements as related to foreseen resource availability.
- 42. In discussing the allocation of limited resources between approved projects and Country Programmes, the Secretariat explained that such allocation would be based on guidance provided by the governing body. Specifically, priority would be accorded to least developed and low-income, food-deficit countries, and within these categories, to better-performing projects and Country Programmes. Furthermore, the Board would decide on potential country resource levels - and not 'entitlements' for a particular country. The level of commitment for individual activities would have to be in line with the ceiling of commitments and availability of resources.
- 43. The Secretariat confirmed that it would provide to the Board documentation on all programme activities within the context of the approved Country Programme, approved by the Executive Director under her delegated authority.

Country Programme - Bangladesh (1996/EB.3/15)

- 44. All representatives expressed appreciation and strong support for the Country Programme document (CPD) for Bangladesh (WFP/EB.3/96/7/Add.3). In particular, the CPD was considered to be well focused on the main goal of reducing poverty and food insecurity. Other points positively commented upon included:
 - a) effective targeting to the poorest of the poor;
 - b) close coordination with bilateral donors and other United Nations agencies at the field and headquarters level;
 - c) strong government support at the policy, resourcing and implementation levels;
 - d) a pro-active approach to gender inequalities;
 - e) emphasis on skill formation; and
 - f) attention to the management of physical assets created.



45. The Board was reassured about the Government's commitment to implement in full all recommendations made by the Strengthening the Institutions for Food-Assisted Development (SIFAD) Task Force. This would also result in an enhanced level of monitoring, evaluation and reporting on all activities undertaken by line agencies. The WFP country office would thus be able to concentrate on impact evaluation.
46. The Board underlined and commended as exemplary the recipient Government's strong commitment to an effective use of food aid, as evidenced by the important contributions it is making to both of the ongoing programme activities.

Country Programme - Bolivia (1996/EB.3/16)

47. The Board supported the CPD (WFP/EB.3/96/7/Add.1) in general, but expressed concern that the feeding programmes to be supported did not demonstrate sufficiently their sustainability; it pointed out that rural development in depressed areas should focus on needed food production.
48. The Board noted the need for more details to substantiate descriptions of the Basic Activities of the programmes, and requested more details of types and uses of monetization.
49. One representative questioned WFP's comparative advantage in credit and the appropriateness of committing additional resources at this point in time to Bolivia above a level of 17.9 million dollars.
50. Concern for a possible change of government and its effect on the Country Programme was expressed. The Government assured that there had been changes in the past, but that donor standing agreements had been respected. WFP and government representatives assured participation of NGOs such as Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in highly proven credit systems. Cooperation with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on credit matters would be explored. WFP priorities within the CPD would be more sharply focused.

Country Programme - Pakistan (1996/EB.3/17)

51. Although some representatives wondered whether within the global resource shortfalls faced by the Programme, the projected 1998 level for Pakistan of 13 million dollars would be reached, WFP was commended for its programme as regards two sectors: Social Action Programme (SAP) and Management of Natural Resources. Special mention was made of efforts to address gender issues and to move towards the social forestry approach. It was noted that WFP assistance is coordinated with sister United Nations agencies, the World Bank, donors and NGOs, and well integrated within the United Nations Country Strategy Note. Representatives were informed of the forthcoming Evaluation of the Natural Resource Management Sector which would, *inter alia*, review the performance of the food stamp programme and include additional production indicators. The Government confirmed that wheat prices paid for WFP supplies would be in line with commercial rates.

Development project proposal for Executive Board approval - Jordan 5783 (1996/EB.3/18)

52. The Board raised specific technical and socio-economic issues which could impinge on project implementation.



53. It was recommended that coordination and cooperation between the Ministries of Agriculture, Water and Environment be reinforced.
54. WFP assistance should be closely coordinated with technical/funding sources, and bilateral organizations and NGOs which are involved in the project area.

Development project proposal for Executive Board approval - Mauritania 055 (Exp.7) (1996/EB.3/19)

55. The Board praised the project for incorporating important elements such as the participation of girls, targeting, appropriateness of the food basket and the extent of community involvement.
56. Concern was raised about the open-ended nature of the project, which has been going on for 32 years. Some representatives pointed out the need for a phasing-out plan.
57. There was some discussion on the size of the government contribution. In this connection, it was noted that Mauritania is both a least developed and low-income, food-deficit country.
58. It was proposed that the document could have included lessons learned over the 32 years' duration of the project, and also a section on how it related to the recommendations of the thematic evaluation mission on long-standing school canteen projects in West Africa.
59. The importance of measurable indicators for monitoring the project's impact was underlined.
60. The Secretariat informed the Board that, for all practical purposes, the process of phasing out WFP assistance had already begun. The six poorest regions were now being targeted, instead of the original 13. The number of pupils targeted by WFP assistance represented only 13.5 percent of primary school students.

Protracted refugee and displaced person project for Executive Board approval - Cambodia 5483 (Exp. 3) (1996/EB.3/23)

61. In approving protracted refugee and displaced person project (PRO) Cambodia 5483 (Exp.3) - Programme for rehabilitation, the Board noted the following:
 - a) While recognizing that the country was still in a difficult transitional phase, WFP should prepare development projects to be initiated as soon as circumstances allowed.
 - b) The PRO should focus on rural development activities supporting the transition towards a market economy.
 - c) The programme should be closely coordinated with those of the Government, other United Nations agencies and NGOs.
 - d) Responsibility for project execution should be gradually transferred to the Government. However, as its capacity was still limited, close monitoring of activities and food management was needed.
 - e) The gradual replacement of international by local staff should continue.



Protracted refugee and displaced person project for Executive Board approval - Ethiopia 5241 (Exp.2) (1996/EB.3/24)

62. The Board expressed concern on the number of refugees being assisted as well as on the eventual need for continuing assistance after the second expansion phase. Variations in food rations for the various refugee groups were endorsed. The importance of providing commodities that correspond to their consumption habits was stressed. The Board encouraged efforts to promote self-reliance among the Sudanese refugees and recommended that, where feasible, technical inputs be pursued regarding the expansion of agricultural activities. It was stressed that specific plans for addressing issues related to development and income-generation, particularly with regard to women, should be rapidly developed.
63. The Secretariat took note of the observations made by representatives, stating that WFP encourages repatriation but that future assistance would be dependent on the security situation in the refugees' countries of origin. Re-registration exercises are planned for the near future, with a view to providing up-to-date, reliable case-load figures. WFP's policy of respecting the food habits of beneficiaries was stressed.

Protracted refugee and displaced person project for Executive Board approval - Iran 4161 (Exp.4) (1996/EB.3/25)

64. In addition to the requirements contained in the document relating to PRO Iran 4161 (Exp.4) (WFP/EB.3/96/9-A/Add.4), a budget revision covering a period of three and a half months was processed, to cover the influx of 40,000 new Iraqi refugees. Depending on trends, a further budget revision would cover the new case-load in 1997.
65. WFP would continue its efforts to improve the monitoring of its assistance and the Bureau for Aliens and Foreign Immigrants Affairs (BAFIA) would facilitate WFP's access to refugee camps all over the country.

Protracted refugee and displaced person project for Executive Board approval - Liberia Regional 4604 (Exp.5) (1996/EB.3/26)

66. The Board noted that issues such as security and access to affected populations have to be taken into account in determining whether wet or dry rations are to be distributed. Close collaboration with international NGOs should be maintained in order to reach these populations.
67. Screening, surveillance and collection of demographic, nutritional and socio-economic data needed further strengthening and adequate funds and personnel should be available to WFP as a matter of priority. A plan for an increase in food-for-work activities was considered necessary, and funding by the United States for a training workshop in such activities was welcomed by the Secretariat.
68. There were some questions on the accuracy of beneficiary population figures in Liberia and Guinea, and on the need to strengthen some strategies for targeted feeding. The implementation of school feeding in Guinea by an implementing partner needed to be accelerated. Enhanced coordination between UNHCR, NGOs and WFP was recommended as a prerequisite to the success of the targeted feeding strategy.
69. WFP's proposal to substantially increase the financial and human resources for the PRO was explained to the donors as a necessary condition for the implementation of the targeted feeding programme and for comprehensive monitoring and reporting.



70. The importance of the coordination between WFP and European Union activities in Côte d'Ivoire was stressed. Clarifications were provided in this respect.

Protracted refugee and displaced person project for Executive Board approval - Afghanistan Regional (1996/EB.3/27)

71. Representatives were updated on recent events in Afghanistan, including the Taliban pronouncements on women and how these may have an impact on WFP relief and rehabilitation programmes in Afghanistan, and on the refugee situation in Iran and Pakistan. WFP is currently re-assessing needs in all three countries, including any possible additional requirements under the Safety Net Programme and as a result of the increased influx of refugees into Pakistan. It was announced that the Assistant Executive Director would be travelling to Afghanistan after the Executive Board session in order to reassess the situation of women and human rights, and how this may affect assistance programmes to Afghanistan.

Progress report on gender balance and the changing WFP staff profile (1996/EB.3/30)

72. The Deputy Executive Director stated in his introduction that, henceforth, information on the staff profile would be updated on a yearly basis; the next update would be submitted to the Board at its May 1997 session. Following the format introduced at this session, such documents would regularly include information on staff who are citizens of economically developing countries.
73. The Board commended the Secretariat for its efforts to increase the representation of women among international professional and higher category staff (currently at 25 percent). Considerable additional efforts would however be required to recruit and retain women to approach the United Nations target of 50 percent of female professional staff by the year 2001.
74. The Board agreed to the need to increase the representation of staff from economically developing countries, in particular of women from such countries. The recent decline in their proportional representation was considered disappointing.
75. The Board urged the establishment of a plan of action in support of these objectives and regular reporting on this subject.

Progress report on the state of WFP premises (1996/EB.3/31)

76. The information document (WFP/EB.3/96/10-B) submitted to the Board presented a progress report rather than a definitive solution to the issue of WFP's headquarters premises. A number of representatives stated that although they appreciated the efforts made by the Secretariat to identify alternative buildings, the situation was unsatisfactory and a decision should be taken by a fixed deadline. One representative - recognizing the need to consider the staff's welfare - proposed that WFP move out of its premises by 1 January 1998. Another highlighted that if a definitive solution was difficult to reach, it may be necessary to alter the clause in the WFP General Regulations pertaining to WFP headquarters being located in Rome.
77. The Representative of Italy summarized the findings of the report and expressed his delegation's appreciation for the Secretariat's efforts in resolving the headquarters premises issue. He added that the Italian authorities were sincerely committed to solving this issue, since it was specifically referred to in the Headquarters Agreement signed by the host



Government. He stated that the Italian Government could only process one option at a time. In this respect, it was focusing on the “Ente delle Poste” building. The Representative confirmed that he had received a communication from the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications, stating that the building would be available within 1997.

78. The Secretariat expressed its appreciation for the Italian Representative’s comments. It stressed that negotiations on the Ente Poste building should begin as soon as possible, ensuring that WFP’s interest/negotiations regarding the Parco de’ Medici building were not affected negatively. In addition, it pointed out that the rental of potential buildings was consistent with market rates for buildings meeting normal standards, and should therefore not be compared to that of the current premises.
79. The Board instructed the Secretariat to find a solution to the WFP headquarters premises and to move out of the current premises by 1 January 1998.

Outline of the Executive Board’s programme of work (1996/EB.3/32)

80. The Board noted that the Third Regular Session of 1997 contemplated a heavy workload. Therefore, it suggested that the new Board taking up office in January 1997 review the agenda of that session and, if deemed necessary, consider the possibility of postponing some of the agenda items of that session to the first session of 1998.

Other business (1996/EB.3/33)

81. The Board took note with appreciation of the Executive Director’s brief on the continuing internal reform efforts. It welcomed the newly recruited senior staff introduced by her.

