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**Executive Board
First Regular Session**

Rome, 4 - 6 February 1998

**SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE
FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE
EXECUTIVE BOARD, 1998**



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PROGRESS REPORT ON WFP'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD FOOD SUMMIT PLAN OF ACTION (1998/EB.1/1)

1. In taking note of the report which had been submitted to the Secretariat of the FAO Committee on World Food Security (CFS) (WFP/EB.1/98/3), the Board remarked that the narrative section of the document had been prepared in accordance with the guidance provided by the Director-General of FAO. Comments made on this first round of reporting to CFS were to be seen as inputs to strengthen future reporting.
2. Several representatives pointed out that the Plan of Action should be taken as a source of innovation and forward-looking strategies, and that the Programme should be more proactive. For example: promoting market development through local purchases, expanding Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) activities and using these activities to build national capacity, increasing linkages with NGOs (especially local NGOs), and strengthening collaboration and coordination among United Nations agencies, in particular through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process at the country level. Some representatives requested the Secretariat to provide examples of the ways in which the Rome Declaration and the WFSPA had influenced WFP's work.
3. Representatives reiterated that full food security is the primary responsibility of individual governments and encouraged the Secretariat to make every effort to direct food aid to those countries which have a proven substantive need, the capacity to use the assistance effectively, and demonstrate a commitment to policies that promote food security.
4. The Secretariat noted the suggestions made by the Board, especially the need for the narrative section of future reports to contain a fuller discussion of a selected set of issues. The Secretariat cited the policy papers on WFP support to countries in establishing and managing national food assistance programmes (WFP/EB.2/97/3-A) and Reaching mothers and children at critical times of their lives (WFP/EB.3/97/3-B) as examples of how the WFSPA had influenced policy development. The Board was informed of the strong and active role WFP is playing in the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and of its full participation in the UNDAF process. The Secretariat assured the Board that it would provide, as soon as possible, detailed information on local purchases.

PROCEDURES FOR THE SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR (1998/EB.1/2)

5. The Board supported the approval of the proposals presented and requested further clarification on the bidding procedures. The Secretariat explained that, since the selection and appointment of the External Auditor is clearly the responsibility of the Executive Board, the bidding procedures should be done by the Bureau with the support of the Secretariat or with the support of any external specialist services that the Bureau may so require. The bids are to be received on the existing confidential and dedicated fax line in the Programme, sealed and opened in accordance with the existing opening procedures, with the participation of the Bureau or of a representative of the Bureau. The opened bids will then be sent to the Bureau for evaluation. The Secretariat assured the Board that it would provide support to the Bureau, if so requested.



6. The Board was informed that more detailed procedures would be developed, including a rating system of the selection criteria. Some representatives stated that, while developing countries should be encouraged to participate in the tender, the selection should be based on the application of the criteria to select the most qualified candidate.
7. One representative commented that there could be cost advantages in sharing the same External Auditor as FAO. The Secretariat concurred that sharing the External Auditor with FAO could be feasible, but it would be up to the Executive Board to choose the External Auditor that could best fulfil the interests of the Programme; it may happen that the External Auditor would be the same one that FAO has. The concept of having a Board of Auditors, as already practised at the United Nations, could be further looked into by the Bureau in the future.

REVISION OF THE ANNEX TO WFP'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS - REVISED WORDING OF THE AUDIT OPINION OF THE EXTERNAL AUDITOR (1998/EB.1/3)

8. The Board agreed that the proposed changes presented in the document would help achieve greater consistency throughout the United Nations system and would reflect best practice. The Board also recognized that the subject matter was highly technical.
9. The Secretariat explained that, in current practice, audit was not limited only to the general review of accounting procedures, but also included the review of internal control systems and of efficiency and effectiveness of operations. It also explained that this was why elements were proposed in the audit opinion instead of exact wording, and why the proposed change reflected best practice. The Secretariat informed the Board that, if the proposed change was approved, WFP would be among the first organizations of the United Nations to approve this new procedure.
10. To assure itself that the External Auditor had utmost flexibility in taking initiative in his/her work, the Board agreed to encourage the External Auditor to continue making a statement in the audit opinion to the effect that his/her examination included a general review of the accounting procedures and such tests of the accounting records and other supporting evidence as he/she considered necessary in the circumstances.
11. The Board requested clarification on the replacement of the term "accounting principles" with "accounting policies". The Secretariat explained the difference between accounting principles (concepts used to define, measure and disclose the elements from which financial statements are constructed) and accounting policies (principles adopted by management as a basis for the preparation of financial statements and records). Hence, the changed reference would be more reflective of the audit criteria used by the External Auditor in his/her examination of the financial transactions of the Programme. The Secretariat assured the Board that the accounting policies adopted by the Programme would be based on accounting principles which follow best practice.



EVALUATION REPORTS (1998/EB.1/4)

a) Review of experiences on food assistance and natural resources

12. The Board commended the objectivity of the report (WFP/EB.1/98/5/3), its timeliness and its potential value for the design of future interventions in the field of natural resources.
13. The discussions focused on the application of the lessons learned. The Secretariat was encouraged to build upon the lessons of this report in order to develop a strategy on food assistance as an efficient tool to protect, develop and use natural resources.
14. The importance of a holistic and integrated approach, which combines technical support and non-food items, was underlined by many representatives. It was observed that this lesson applies to all development projects.
15. Several representatives stressed the need for greater focus on impact rather than on inputs and outputs, and suggested that the time had come for the development of impact indicators which contribute to the measurement of the effect of the project on beneficiaries.
16. Some representatives noted that some projects had suffered from over-ambitious objectives and that the review suggested that more rigorous attention to the design and appraisal phase should contribute towards objectives which are simple and achievable, and which make a real contribution to food security.
17. Representatives also highlighted the importance of the involvement of participants and stakeholders in the design phase, acknowledging that this would entail higher costs and a longer time to reach an acceptable project design, but that projects designed that way were often much more effective in achieving their overall objectives.
18. A representative welcomed the existing Memorandum of Understanding between WFP and UNHCR, and suggested that both organizations examine together environmental degradation in refugee situations to see what could be done.
19. The Secretariat described four areas in which the Office of Evaluation participates in ensuring follow-up to the findings of thematic studies and evaluations. These were:
 - a) preparation of guidelines;
 - b) collaboration with clusters/country offices within WFP as re-organized;
 - c) participation in the design of new programmes and activities through attendance at Programme Review Committee meetings; and
 - d) establishment of systems for applying lessons learned and tracking recommendations.

b) Mid-term evaluation of project Burkina Faso 3326.01—Rural development

20. In discussing the summary mid-term report (WFP/EB.1/98/5/1), the Board expressed concern at the delay in the timing of the evaluation. The Secretariat and the observer from Burkina Faso reported that the Government and the WFP country office had already taken measures to implement the recommendations of the evaluation mission.
21. The Board suggested that greater attention should be paid to the targeting of areas, beneficiaries and activities. The Board recognized the real need of food aid in Burkina Faso, but stressed the importance of focusing on more vulnerable groups, such as school-age children, through specific feeding programmes.
22. Representatives also stressed the importance of adopting a planning methodology such as the logical framework, which ensures that a project has realistic long-term objectives. Both the need to move away from evaluations focused on project achievements following the



input/output tradition, and the adoption of a methodology to identify the benefits of the project for the beneficiary were underscored.

23. Some representatives emphasized the importance of enhancing national capacity and providing the required programme supervision needed to make this project a success. Hope was expressed that the regional cluster would be able to provide such support.

c) Summary report on a theoretical study of WFP assistance to indigenous communities in Latin America

24. The discussions focused on the importance of WFP devising a strategy for assistance to indigenous peoples, as they represent the poorest of the poor. The Board emphasized the importance of collaborating with other organizations in this endeavour, in particular with IFAD, which could provide technical assistance and the funds for micro-credits.
25. Representatives highlighted the need to focus more on the participation of indigenous women at the design and implementation phases, and on their nutritional and micronutrient needs which may be greater as a result of marginalization.
26. The Programme was encouraged to carry out studies to examine how the products of the indigenous peoples could be guaranteed fair market access and to address the problems of lack of proper storage facilities.

COUNTRY PROGRAMME—GUATEMALA (1998/EB.1/5)

27. The Board supported the proposed Country Programme for Guatemala (WFP/EB.1/98/6) and its relationship to the ongoing peace process. It pointed out that clear links should be established between WFP's programme and the peace initiative by prioritizing sectoral interventions.
28. The Board noted with satisfaction that the proposed Country Programme is part of the joint programming of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and expressed the hope that the implementation of UNDAF would lead to an efficient division of labour among United Nations organizations, in order to make it clearer in which cases food aid is the best resource.
29. The Board made specific reference to the National School Meal Programme, which constitutes a priority of the Government, and noted with appreciation WFP's prompt response in support of this programme for 1998 and 1999. It emphasized the need for enhanced institutional coordination. In relation to monetization, the Secretariat was urged to give highest attention to its efficient operationalization.
30. The Board also highlighted the importance of the Government's counterpart contribution to the Country Programme.
31. The Board noted that the Country Programme should ensure that activities related to forestry and soil conservation have a positive impact on the local environment.

COUNTRY STRATEGY OUTLINE (CSO)—DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (1998/EB.1/6)

32. The Board endorsed the strategy delineated in the CSO. It agreed with the Secretariat's proposal not to proceed with a Country Programme.



33. Some representatives questioned the appropriateness of WFP continuing to undertake activities in a country that has reached such a level of development. Most pointed out the unmet needs of large segments of the population still living in extreme poverty.
34. The Board highlighted the need for effective targeting by WFP projects in the Dominican Republic and for ensuring adequate counterpart support.

PROTRACTED REFUGEE AND DISPLACED PERSON PROJECT FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVAL—ANGOLA 5602.02 (1998/EB.1/7)

35. The Board commended the effective targeting of assistance and the fact that a substantial number of beneficiaries of the project are women. The choice of performance indicators was appreciated.
36. Representatives noted with satisfaction WFP's efforts to bridge emergency and rehabilitation assistance. They acknowledged that while the transition from emergency assistance to rehabilitation support was on track, the process was still very fragile, and commended the Secretariat for maintaining the capacity to respond to emergencies in Angola.
37. WFP should avoid disincentives to agricultural production. The Board requested that the situation be monitored carefully, and that efforts be made to effect local purchases. Internal transport, storage and handling (ITSH) and other direct support costs should be kept as low as possible. The Board noted that provisions had been made for the local purchase of maize and that further opportunities for local procurement would be pursued.

PROTRACTED REFUGEE AND DISPLACED PERSON PROJECT FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVAL—IRAN 5950.00 (1998/EB.1/8)

38. The Board expressed support for the continuation of assistance to refugees in Iran. Interest was shown in the oil-for-schooling activity, and the Board encouraged more participation by women. It requested the Secretariat to monitor repatriation closely. The Board commended the Government's substantial support to the project and its collaboration with WFP. Closer supervision of the implementation of activities was encouraged.

PROTRACTED REFUGEE AND DISPLACED PERSON PROJECT FOR EXECUTIVE BOARD APPROVAL—UGANDA 5623.01 (1998/EB.1/9)

39. The Board commended WFP for the quality of the project document (WFP/EB.1/98/8/3), and on the excellent work that staff in Uganda were performing in difficult and dangerous circumstances. Concern was expressed about security and its effect on refugees' settlement and potential for self-sufficiency through agriculture. The Board was also concerned about the quality and timeliness in the provision of seeds, tools and extension services. Representatives recorded their approval of the plan for frequent and regular surveys to ascertain the possibility for phasing down food aid rations, stressing the need to couple this with sensitization campaigns. While expressing appreciation for the Government's policies to assist settlement, representatives noted that repatriation of the refugees was the most viable long-term solution and requested that interventions on both sides of the border



should be coordinated. The Board asked that more details be provided regarding the role of women in food management and distribution.

PROGRESS REPORTS ON APPROVED PROJECTS—BENIN 5215.00 (1998/EB.1/10)

40. The Board enquired about food self-sufficiency in Benin, and administrative arrangements regarding import of food aid in Kenya, as well as the need to review critically the performance of this type of projects. The Secretariat provided the required clarifications.

REPORT ON EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE (1998/EB.1/11)

41. The Secretariat updated the Board on assistance provided by WFP to emergency situations around the world.
42. WFP's Director of the Asia and Pacific Bureau briefed the Board on the food security situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and on WFP's response to the crisis. It was explained that the scope of WFP's proposed intervention was based on the food needs of the most vulnerable groups, in particular women and children. WFP had three major objectives in DPRK: to save lives, improve food security for vulnerable groups, and in the longer term, support agricultural reform.
43. While appreciating the size and complexity of WFP's operations in DPRK, the Board nevertheless expressed concern over donors' capacity to fund the operation, the need for effective coordination between WFP and sister United Nations agencies in mobilizing resources for and implementing the operation, and the need for addressing structural causes of food insecurity in DPRK.
44. WFP's Director of the Africa Bureau presented a brief overview of the Programme's operations in the following emergency situations:
- Somalia
 - Kenya
 - Angola
 - Sierra Leone
 - Sahel region
 - Great Lakes region
 - Democratic Republic of the Congo
 - Tanzania
 - Ethiopia
 - Sudan
45. WFP's Regional Manager for Latin America and the Caribbean updated the Board on the activities which the Programme is carrying out to counter negative effects of the El Niño phenomenon in the Latin American Region.

