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32nd FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Buenos Aires, Argentina, 26 to 30 March 2012

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE 31ST SESSION OF THE REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Executive summary

- Brief on the outcome of the 31st FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC31), held in Panama City from 26 to 30 April 2010, attended by 28 delegations and 20 observers.

Suggested action by the Regional Conference

- Take note of the outcome of the Regional Conference (LARC31) to streamline and provide continuity to the governance process.

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Mr Chairperson,

Distinguished delegates and observers at the Regional Conference,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, it is an honour and a pleasure to be here today and to have the opportunity of presenting this Regional Conference with a brief summary of the outcome of the 31st FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean (LARC 31).

The LARC 31 Regional Conference was held in Panama City from 26 to 30 April 2010, attended by 28 delegations and 20 observers. The final report was made available to all delegates and observers on the FAO website and afterwards presented to the 140th Session of the FAO Council, held from 29 November to 3 December 2010 and to the 37th Conference, held from 25 June to 2 July 2011, in Rome, Italy. With reference to the issues discussed and, in particular, to the agenda item "Matters arising from the World Summit on Food Security and the 36th Session of the FAO Conference,

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notably implementation of the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA), including the decentralized offices network", the Regional Conference:

- Stated that the decisions on the decentralization process should not be based exclusively on the criteria of cost reduction and savings. It considered it vital that there be better formulation and clarification of the flexibility approach to determining the size and composition of the decentralized offices.

With reference to the agenda item "Report on FAO activities (2008–2009) in the Region and actions taken on the main recommendations of the 30th FAO Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean", the Regional Conference:

- Took note of the main challenges ahead, in particular the disjunction that existed between growth in production and elimination of poverty. Among the structural causes of this disjunction were wage labour conditions in the rural sector.
- Indicated that the price of inputs, particularly fertilizers, often represented serious constraints to increased food production and the achievement of profitability in farming, adding that the situation was particularly severe in small island countries. It recommended that FAO should look into the formulation of policies to address this situation.

With reference to the four Regional Commissions (Forestry [LAFC], Livestock Development [CODEGALAC], Inland Fisheries [COPESCAALC] and Western Central Atlantic Fisheries [WECAFC]), the Regional Conference:

- Noted that the work of the Commissions should receive more support from countries and be given greater visibility. It also proposed that they should conduct their work in greater depth and detail and suggested that they could play an advisory role for the Regional Conferences.
- Recommended that COPESCAALC and WECAFC should intensify cooperation between countries of the region for the sustainable management and use of transboundary river basins, and suggested that the commissions could serve to promote South–South cooperation.

It also discussed the situation in Haiti and the process of reconstruction: considerations on food security and agriculture for future programming.

With regard to the agenda item "Food and nutritional security: the human right to food", the Regional Conference:

- Recommended that FAO should give priority to cooperation for staple food production in family farming, placing an emphasis on the problems of market entry, high transaction costs and equitable participation of family farmers in value chains.

The Regional Conference endorsed the report on implementation of the Programme of Work and Budget 2010–2011 and on suggested areas of priority action of FAO in the region during the 2012–2013 biennium:

- food and nutritional security
- climate change and environmental sustainability
- transboundary diseases
- promotion of small-scale agriculture/family farming

For the first time in a Regional Conference, reports and proposals were submitted for the Caribbean, Central American and South American subregions, and Plenary recognized that group discussions to identify the priorities of each subregion contributed significantly to FAO's plan of work for the region.

The Subregion of the Caribbean identified the following priorities:

- risk management
- food and nutritional security
- certified quality seeds

- health and safety
- climate change
- transboundary diseases

It also identified other issue that needed to be considered:

- agricultural insurance;
- agricultural credit;
- South–South cooperation;
- FAO support in accessing existing funds for food security.

In addition, it stressed the need for FAO to devote a specific programme of technical assistance to Haiti.

The Subregion of Central America, Mexico and the Dominican Republic identified the following priorities:

- family farming;
- territorial rural development;
- integrated water management;
- plant and animal health and food safety;
- sustainable development of livestock with a focus on small production;
- linkages between small producers and the market.

It also identified cross-cutting issues that needed to be considered within FAO cooperation in the region:

- integrated development of human resources associated with agriculture;
- institutional strengthening to enhance government capacity of response;
- review of agricultural policy in the region;
- strengthening of capacity for research and technological innovation, knowledge management and access to information, with the creation of regional institutional linkages;
- strengthening of extension, training and technology transfer to small producers;
- discussion and agreement on concepts relating to family farming;
- strengthening of institutional capacities for climate change mitigation and adaptation as related to agriculture;
- development of institutional capacity for the management of agricultural financial alternatives.

The Subregion of South America identified the following priorities:

- right to adequate food;
- family farming;
- rural development;
- social technologies;
- quality and safety;
- climate change;
- biodiversity;
- two transversal issues: gender and youth.

Discussion of the agenda item “Global and regional emergency issues” focused on risk management and responses to emergencies in the agricultural, forestry and fisheries sectors in Latin America and the Caribbean. The Regional Conference:

- Recognized the need for integrated actions that would concurrently permit the evaluation and installation of early warning systems to reduce risks and the broadening of capacity of response to social and natural disasters and emergencies.

- Signalled the need to significantly broaden the system of agricultural insurance and requested FAO support for its development, especially in the countries of the Caribbean and in other highly vulnerable areas.
- Emphasized the need for FAO support to help identify methods of measuring the effects of greenhouse gases.
- Called for greater FAO support in the use of technologies for the prevention and reduction of risk, specifying in particular the role of the Regional Office and the need to establish cooperation mechanisms between countries of the region.

With reference to the agenda item "Promoting synergies and collaboration between the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Commission on Genetic Resources of FAO and the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA)", the Regional Conference:

- Requested that FAO support the strengthening of biotechnology research centres and the training of specialized personnel in the countries of the region.
- Indicated the need for FAO technical cooperation to establish synergies in capacity building for improvement of the agricultural sector, the environment and trade.
- Called on FAO to support the development of small-scale production, with consideration given to the adjustments and adaptations that were relevant to each specific case.
- Recommended that FAO should support the development of infrastructure for the preservation and provision of genetic resources and should intensify technical cooperation in certified seed production programmes.

Following discussions on "Climate change and its impact on agricultural, forestry and fisheries production in Latin America and the Caribbean", the Regional Conference;

- Requested that FAO look into the possibility and merit of establishing a system of monitoring the impacts of climate change on agriculture, fisheries and forestry.
- Stressed that FAO's action on climate change should consider vulnerability deriving from poverty and natural conditions. In particular, it highlighted the serious effects of climate change on coastal areas and fishing communities, and the need to consider the appropriate utilization of water.

Referring to "Rural territorial development and its institutional implications in Latin America and the Caribbean", the Conference:

- Indicated that the development of family farming required not only advances in primary production but also its integration into production chains, and support for financing and marketing. Rural development should be integrated into socioeconomic development and should facilitate the diversification of agricultural production, the expansion of periurban agriculture and the promotion of rural off-farm activities.
- Stressed that FAO's cooperation agenda in the countries of the region should encourage follow-up to the commitments agreed at the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD). It also acknowledged FAO's actions to promote the right to food and suggested promoting the right to land in order to foster greater equity in its distribution.

With regard to the Report on the CODEX Alimentarius and food safety in the region, Plenary expressed its concern about the limited participation of countries of the region in Codex meetings. It pointed out that this was due to the geographic spread of meetings, the shortage of funds for participation and the poor dissemination of information. It recognized the importance of the trust fund but emphasized the need for additional resources and for a review of the classification criteria determining eligibility to the benefits of the fund. The Regional Conference proposed that thought be

given to the possibility of creating a supplementary regional fund to foster greater participation of the countries of the region.

As I have already mentioned, the Report of 31st Session of LARC was presented to the 140th Session of Council and to the 37th FAO Conference.

The Council endorsed the LARC Report and, in particular, the areas of priority actions highlighting special concerns. The Council recommended that the outcomes of the Regional Conferences be utilized for further reflection on priorities, and in the preparation of the next PWB; the next set of Programme Implementation Reports be based on the Result-Based Framework. The Council noted a proposal made by LARC that the official name of FAO in Spanish be changed so that the word "food" precede "agriculture" for consistency among designations of the Organization in other language versions.

The 37th Session of Conference endorsed the LARC report and took note of the recommendations presented therein. The Conference decided that the Regional Conferences to be held in 2012 should review FAO's country coverage in their region, with a view to enhancing effectiveness and efficiency, and make recommendations to the 2012 sessions of Council on the most suitable structure and skills mix of the DOs network in their region.

I wish to conclude by reiterating the Regional Conference's agreement that the Regional Office in Santiago, Chile, would only have one multidisciplinary team that would incorporate the multidisciplinary team for South America. This should improve programme and budget management, as well as saving on human and financial resources.

Thank you very much for your attention.