

Informal note for the record of the joint informal meeting of the FAO Council, the IFAD Executive Board and the WFP Executive Board

13 September 2019

Chaired by the President of the WFP Executive Board

1. The third informal joint meeting of the Council of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Executive Board of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Executive Board of the World Food Programme (WFP) took place on 13 September 2019 at WFP headquarters in Rome.¹ The meeting was chaired by H.E. Hisham Mohamed Badr, President of the WFP Executive Board and Representative of List A (Egypt).
2. Following welcoming remarks by the Chair and opening statements by participants, Ms Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, spoke as the representative of the Secretary-General on the subject of United Nations development system reform and its implications for the Rome-based agencies (RBAs). An interactive question and answer session followed the Deputy Secretary-General's remarks. The Deputy Secretary-General then spoke on the subject of the situation in the Sahel, following which the participants heard a further update on that subject by Ms Mbaranga Gasarabwe, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which was also followed by a question and answer session. Under the heading of management services, the participants discussed enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems, including potential compatibility and cost savings, and the coherence of the private sector strategies of the three RBAs. The first topic was kicked off with a presentation by Mr Laurent Thomas, Deputy Director-General (Operations), FAO, and the second with a presentation by Ms Thouraya Triki, Director, Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division, IFAD. In considering these matters the participants had before them a briefing note on the Sahel; a draft RBA plan of action for the Sahel; a report on ERP implementation and potential compatibilities among the RBAs; and a progress report on RBA common services.

Opening of the meeting

3. The **Chair** welcomed the Deputy Secretary-General, the principals of the RBAs, the Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council, the National Goodwill Ambassador to WFP from Jordan and all participants, noting that the current joint informal meeting of the RBA governing bodies was the first to be hosted by WFP.
4. The **Chair** noted that the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General was particularly appropriate given the relevance of RBA collaboration to the ongoing reform of the United Nations development system and its objective of maximizing collaboration among countries, United Nations entities and other development actors in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The work of the RBAs was focused on SDGs 1 (ending poverty) and 2 (attaining zero hunger), and, with the number of undernourished people in the world continuing to rise, improving food security and ending hunger were of the utmost importance. He called upon all stakeholders to scale up efforts and promote partnerships between governments, the entire United Nations system, including the RBAs, international financial institutions, the private sector and civil society to work together to overcome

¹ Because the meeting was informal and not a platform for decision making it was not memorialized in an official report. The present informal note for the record provides an indication of the discussions that took place during the meeting and is for information only.



the immense challenges that the world was currently facing in the field of food security and sustainable development. He stressed that the forthcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly would provide an opportunity for elevating these issues on the agenda of the international community.

5. Calling on the RBAs to increase their collaboration, **the Chair** suggested that any senior officials from national governments who visited Rome be offered the opportunity to have a joint meeting with the managements of the three Rome-based agencies to discuss possible joint projects to be implemented in their own countries.
6. The **Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council** said that the large numbers of national representatives and senior managers from the RBAs in attendance demonstrated their high expectations regarding collaboration. United Nations development system reform added impetus to collaboration efforts by offering opportunities to enhance efficiency and effectiveness through the leveraging of the competitive advantages of United Nations entities. He welcomed the Deputy Secretary-General and looked forward to hearing her views on issues raised by the reform effort.
7. Ms Amal Al-Dabbas, **Goodwill Ambassador to WFP from Jordan**, described her humanitarian work in Jordan and beyond, where her fame as an actress enabled her to raise awareness of WFP and its contribution to serving people in need. She emphasized the importance of school feeding in enabling children to attend school and giving them the nutrients they needed to learn in preparation for becoming the pillars of the future, as well as the value of cash-for-work projects in helping Jordanian women to support their families. She had helped to produce a short film on cash-for-work projects that helped an average of 10,000 unemployed young people per year. She was now looking for new partners to support Jordan and the region during a period of economic challenges and was proud to represent WFP, which fed 500,000 of the 1.3 million Syrian refugees hosted by Jordan. She had also participated in radio and television campaigns promoting healthy food consumption as a contribution to the achievement of zero hunger by 2030 – a noble goal.
8. The participants then viewed two short videos, one presented by Ms Darine El Khatib, the **FAO Goodwill Ambassador for zero hunger in the Near East and North Africa region**, and the other presenting examples of successful RBA collaboration in the field.
9. The **Deputy Secretary-General** thanked the leaders of the RBAs for inviting her to the informal meeting, which fell 15 months after the United Nations General Assembly had adopted its resolution on United Nations development system reform. She conveyed the greetings of the Secretary-General, whose vision of ending human suffering through achievement of the SDGs was reflected in the spirit of the joint RBA meeting.
10. The main purpose of reform was to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations in serving the world's people. Progress made during its first year of implementation was the result of the engagement of United Nations entities and partners, including those in academia, civil society and the private sector. Member States had played a pivotal role in providing encouragement and crucial leadership through the governing bodies, including by ensuring timely cost-sharing contributions from the entities of the United Nations development system.
11. In the reform effort, the RBAs were leading by example at both the global and country levels, with WFP leading improvements in business operations, including the development of mutual recognition agreements, FAO working within United Nations country teams to strengthen links between humanitarian and development work and IFAD participating in working groups on the new United Nations sustainable development cooperation frameworks (UNSDCFs) and other frameworks. A joint RBA visit to the Lao People's Democratic Republic had allowed the agencies to see the new resident coordinator system in operation. The transition of resident coordinators from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to the



United Nations Secretariat had been completed in January 2019 and had empowered the coordinators while strengthening accountability for coordination of the United Nations development system in countries.

12. Other developments included the launch of a new management and accountability framework for United Nations country teams, which would be adjusted in line with the needs identified during early implementation; the new UNSDCFs, which would replace the United Nations development assistance frameworks in guiding the work of all United Nations entities within countries and serve as the foundation for accountability to governments; and new common country analyses, which would facilitate the planning of joint work among humanitarian, development and peace actors. The United Nations response in Haiti showed how the new system would operate, with joint planning by a United Nations special political mission and the United Nations country team aimed at linking the emergency response to sustainable development.
13. So far, 38 Member States and 19 United Nations entities had contributed a total of USD 195 million to the special purpose trust fund for the resident coordinator system, and Member States had signed a funding compact in support of greater cohesion within the United Nations system. Progress had been made towards the Secretary-General's effectiveness and efficiency goals, and the Deputy Secretary-General acknowledged the leadership of the Executive Director of WFP and the head of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in the development of more effective tools for day-to-day operations in country offices with the aim of using the resources saved to support programmes. Options being explored included the use of common premises and the pooling of resources for administrative processes in country offices.
14. Reiterating the commitment to involving Member States in the reform through open and transparent dialogue, the Deputy Secretary-General outlined ongoing work on reviewing United Nations responses at the regional level and establishing multi-country offices in response to the emergence of new cross-border challenges. She called on Member States to provide leadership and guidance for the reform in five main ways: ensuring that entities' reporting systems and country programme documents were in line with the new UNSDCFs, and supporting entities' investments in common country assessments, which provided the anchor for UNSDCFs; encouraging entities to increase their use of shared premises and services, including by supporting initiatives such as the United Nations data cube; guiding agencies' internal discussions on the funding compact, to which FAO and WFP were early signatories, especially regarding commitments for core and pooled funding; ensuring that the resident coordinator system received cost-sharing contributions, including through the 1 percent levy on contributions; and encouraging entities to put forward their best candidates for resident coordinator positions and to review their human resources procedures to ensure that country teams had the right skills and incentives.
15. During the forthcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly summits would be held on climate, health, financing, small-island developing States and progress towards the SDGs. It was likely that there would be calls for accelerated efforts to achieve the SDGs by 2030, in which partnerships among United Nations entities and beyond would be essential and tackling hunger of the utmost importance.
16. The **Chair** thanked the Deputy Secretary-General for her inspiring presentation.
17. The **Director-General of FAO**, who had taken up his position less than a month earlier, underlined his commitment to increased collaboration, mentioning a recent meeting at which the leadership of FAO, IFAD and WFP had met visiting ministers from China. FAO was fully engaged in United Nations development system reform, to which it was the fifth largest contributor out of 19 United Nations agencies. Recent actions in support of the reform included the first ever global meeting of FAO's leadership; the provision of policy and technical support to



member countries, including on enhanced data collection and analysis; and an informal briefing for permanent representatives on the Hand-in-Hand Initiative.

18. The **President of IFAD** thanked the bureaux of the three RBA boards for ensuring that the informal meeting took place and inviting the Deputy Secretary-General. Recognizing that efficient and effective development required greater coherence across the United Nations system, he reiterated IFAD's commitment to United Nations development system reform, which had inspired the fund to decentralize its operations in order to be closer to government and private sector partners in countries and to align its country strategic opportunities programmes with the new UNSDCFs and countries' own plans. IFAD welcomed the new resident coordinator system and resource sharing arrangements; its policy was to use the premises of other United Nations entities in the countries where it operated. The RBAs had made significant progress in the harmonization of corporate services and were exploring the options for joint procurement of services.
19. The **Executive Director of WFP** welcomed the new cooperative spirit that reform was bringing to the United Nations, including the willingness to engage more with the private sector and other actors interested in development issues. This wider collaboration was essential in getting the most from the limited funds available. The new spirit was also reflected in the added impetus for more effective and strategic collaboration among the RBAs. He called on Member States to continue holding the RBAs and national governments accountable for providing effective responses with sustainable results.
20. The **President of IFAD** opened the floor to questions and comments from participants.
21. On behalf of the **European regional group**, the Representative of **Malta** welcomed the RBAs' involvement in the ongoing review of the United Nations' presence in countries and their efforts to identify additional areas of collaboration, including in the establishment of common operating procedures. Given the importance of ending hunger and promoting food security, the RBAs should ensure that their work was prioritized in UNSDCFs and given more visibility within the United Nations system and in discussions related to United Nations development system reform.
22. The representative of **Kuwait** emphasized the importance of carrying out regular assessments of RBA collaboration initiatives and asked for views on the current phase of cooperation. Regarding United Nations reform, he asked whether resident coordinators would be responsible for ensuring that cooperation and partnerships were based on realistic and objective measures.
23. The representative of the **Dominican Republic**, as the outgoing Chair of the Committee on World Food Security, requested that the Committee be considered an ex officio participant in future joint meetings as a unique body with equal contributions from each of the three RBAs.
24. The representative of **Germany** said that the work of the RBAs was more relevant than ever given the need for accelerated work towards SDGs 1 and 2. There was need for more cross-sectoral collaboration within the United Nations system and with other actors. The RBAs should focus on their respective core competencies and comparative advantages, have clear divisions of tasks and responsibilities and develop joint functions and programmes whenever possible. He asked for the Deputy Secretary-General's views on the appointment of resident coordinators from the RBAs in countries with high rates of hunger and on the establishment of cross-sectoral platforms for SDG 2 stakeholders at the country level, in which the RBAs would have a leading role.
25. The representative of the **Islamic Republic of Iran** said that with United Nations development system reform the RBAs were becoming a results-based alliance focused on fighting hunger and alleviating poverty. This would require each agency to demonstrate the results it had achieved alone as required by its mandate, while the United Nations at a high level created the conditions under which the three agencies could maximize synergies.



26. The representative of **Angola** called for stronger cooperation with the United Nations in New York as the RBAs sought to enhance the links between their emergency and development responses by saving lives in ways that contributed to capacity building and the enhancement of productivity. The expansion of new technology into rural areas would be essential to that and would require support from the RBAs and the United Nations system. Given that conflict was both a cause and a result of hunger he asked how the RBAs could establish greater links to the United Nations Security Council.
27. The representative of **Norway**, speaking also on behalf of **Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden (the Nordic countries)**, welcomed the inclusion of United Nations agencies based outside New York in the reform process. The achievement of SDG 2 could serve as a test case of collaboration within the United Nations system. In this regard the Nordic countries had three questions: how to coordinate actions across the United Nations system; how to take advantage of the new coordination tools in order to ensure effective United Nations responses; and whether all resident coordinators would be called on to strengthen the focus on addressing food security at the country level.
28. The representative of **France** emphasized the importance of cooperation among the RBAs and within the United Nations system in achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The Committee on World Food Security also had an important role in bringing together the three agencies and involving private sector and civil society entities. Reiterating Member States' commitment to encouraging progress in United Nations development system reform, the representative asked the Deputy Secretary-General what the main areas of focus were in the reform process, what role Member States should play in it and when the system-wide strategic document would be ready.
29. Responding to these points, the **Deputy Secretary-General** said that common country assessments were essential in identifying the priorities in each country. Much work towards the achievement of other goals would contribute to the reduction of hunger, and United Nations entities should ensure that their country-level staff had the right skills to help governments achieve their goals for economic development, job creation, health and other matters. Rather than fitting the work to agencies' mandates, the mandates should be reoriented to serve the requirements of the 2030 Agenda. Agencies were being asked to examine the differences between the new UNSDCFs and the United Nations development assistance frameworks, which had been based on agencies' mandates.
30. The independence of the resident coordinator allowed coordinators to focus on the SDGs and, together with the new coordination framework, facilitated more holistic responses from agencies. The shift to such responses would require a transition period as United Nations country teams completed their work within recently approved development assistance frameworks before developing their first UNSDCF. The RBAs led the way in seeking funding for activities that contributed to various aspects of food security and involved more than one agency.
31. Organization of a conference on food security and nutrition was another valuable contribution from the RBAs, particularly in the light of recent discussions on the ocean economy and its potential in climate action and the reduction of hunger and poverty. It was important that country teams receive the support they needed from the headquarters of United Nations entities and, while accountability was important, complying with reporting requirements took time and other resources that country teams could otherwise use for the design and implementation of activities.
32. While eradicating poverty and addressing hunger were likely to emerge as overarching priorities for United Nations engagement, national stakeholders set the priorities for their countries. Where the institutional capacity for doing so was lacking, experts from United Nations country teams worked with ministries and other national partners to help define and achieve goals and identify the areas

where United Nations entities rather than other actors could best serve the people. It was therefore essential to increase the visibility of the United Nations' work within a country.

33. In each country, the performance of the resident coordinator system in supporting the government would be assessed once a year to measure the results obtained by both the resident coordinator and each of the United Nations agencies operating in the country. Many United Nations country teams lacked staff with the necessary skills for the new way of working and filling these capacity gaps was a priority. It would require the RBAs to expand their roles beyond crisis response, and a steering committee on the transition from humanitarian to development work was focusing on eight countries to explore how to plan and implement this shift. The role of the United Nations was to work with national stakeholders in using the SDG framework as a tool for addressing the issues they faced in their countries and achieving national goals.
34. New technologies had much potential, including to open up new ways of working in agriculture and education that were attractive to young people. The RBAs were leading the way in integrating new technologies into their work, including in WFP's humanitarian responses.
35. Coordination among United Nations agencies was managed through cooperation platforms and facilitated by the repositioning of United Nations country teams. As reform called for enhanced partnerships with entities outside the United Nations, there was a need to ensure that partners understood the new, more integrated ways of working. To that end, new strategies had been developed for areas such as support to young people, employment and gender parity, and they needed to be operationalized.
36. Increased engagement with governments and other national stakeholders made it easier to appoint resident coordinators with the right skills for addressing needs and priorities in their respective countries, regardless of which United Nations entities that they came from. The Deputy Secretary-General called on United Nations entities to put forward their best staff members as candidates for resident coordinator positions, which were also open to people from outside the United Nations.
37. Member States were providing inputs for preparation of the system-wide strategic document. These would be incorporated into a draft for formal presentation to the Membership.
38. The **Director-General of FAO** agreed that entities should put forward their best people for resident coordinator positions because the reputation of the United Nations system depended on having good leadership in countries.
39. The **Executive Director of WFP** emphasized the value of appointing coordinators from outside the United Nations system as a way of bringing in new ideas and perspectives and called on the United Nations to be flexible in that regard.
40. The **President of IFAD** said that countries' needs and the strength of the United Nations country teams in addressing those needs were the main issues. The United Nations also needed to recognize that a country's needs could sometimes be best served by expertise from outside the United Nations system.
41. The representative of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland** requested information on the alignment of the RBA action plan for the Sahel with UNSDCFs in the countries concerned and emphasized the importance of improving the quality of data for reporting on progress towards the SDGs and other results.
42. The representative of the **Russian Federation** said that while the main task of resident coordinators was to ensure coherent United Nations activities at the country level, decisions taken by governing bodies would continue to be the main guides of entities' activities. It was important that the resident coordinator system and decisions made by the United Nations in New York not conflict



with the decisions of governing bodies. The representative asked about the cost savings that the resident coordinator system was expected to generate.

43. The representative of **Switzerland** noted that United Nations entities had committed to funding the resident coordinator system from cost savings and through the reprioritization of existing budgets. He asked for more information on the measures taken by the RBAs to ensure that they benefited from the resident coordinator system, increased efficiencies and reduced costs.
44. The representative of **Mexico** asked whether there were plans to evaluate the results of the reform, including those in the field, in respect of sustainable development and cost savings.
45. The representative of **Hungary** welcomed the increased contact among the leaders of the RBAs and reiterated the call for more effective collaboration among the agencies. Collaboration should be part of the day-to-day work of the RBAs. His country supported the RBAs' organization of a summit on food systems.
46. The representative of the **Republic of Korea** emphasized the importance of fundraising from the private sector. Observing that this could be a cross-board issue for the RBAs, he asked whether the RBAs had a joint mechanism for coordinating their efforts to raise funds from the private sector.
47. The representative of **Nigeria** said that achievement of the SDGs required more integrated and cross-ministry work within governments. Given the role of conflict in causing hunger and food insecurity, he suggested that the RBAs establish closer contacts with the United Nations Security Council.
48. The representative of **Canada** requested the Deputy Secretary-General's views on how the governing bodies could best support the RBAs in implementing United Nations development system reform. In particular, how to move from a funding to a financing approach, including more strategic use of resources and greater engagement with the private sector; how to measure the impact of RBA collaboration in order to inform wider country-level collaboration in the United Nations system; how the RBAs were mapping their regional-level capacities as part of the reform process; and how the three agencies were sequencing their country-level documents to ensure that they fed into UNSDCFs and drew from common country assessments.
49. The representative of **Afghanistan** asked whether there were core indicators for measuring the success of United Nations collaboration at the country level.
50. The representative of **Malaysia** requested more information on how Member States could support the reform and work of the United Nations beyond providing funding, particularly how countries with resident coordinators could support the resident coordinator system and related issues. Joint discussions between the RBAs and visiting government ministers were a good step in this direction.
51. The representative of **Thailand** said that in organizing the joint informal meeting the RBAs had demonstrated their willingness to work with Member States to improve conditions at the country level. Following recent visits by RBA representatives to the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Cambodia earlier in the year, the representative requested an update on the progress made by the RBAs in the region.
52. The representative of the **European Union** said there was a need to measure the results of interventions, including measures to pave the way for sustainable handover by creating space for private investments and preparing local people and governments, and to assess the value of developing a joint RBA strategy for fundraising from the private sector.

53. The representative of **Yemen** said that alongside the work to enhance collaboration between humanitarian and development actors it was important to ensure good relations and cooperation between local people and the United Nations entities working in their communities, suggesting that successful interventions were not always well received by local communities.
54. The **Deputy Secretary-General** said that the early steps of United Nations development system reform had already yielded results, but Member States had to be realistic about the timescale for full implementation in all the countries involved. In planning and implementing the reform, the United Nations was building on structures that already existed, and this was more time-consuming than starting afresh. All steps in the reform had been agreed to by Member States in New York, but that was not always communicated to members of the governing bodies of United Nations entities based elsewhere; she asked the members of the RBA governing bodies to talk to their counterparts elsewhere.
55. Gathering the data needed for reporting on results was a severe challenge. The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data was developing a platform for data collection and sharing, but major investments were still needed. Investments were also needed in governments' capacities to collect data for the baselines that all United Nations country offices were required to establish.
56. Governing bodies had an essential role in guiding all the work of United Nations entities, and their views would be sought at all stages of the reform, including on when and how to shift to the new UNSDCFs while respecting decisions already made by governing bodies. Efficiency gains and cost savings were being generated from, for example, the use of shared premises; the United Nations aimed to use these to finance programmes, but upfront investments were often needed and finding them was challenging. The United Nations planned to produce an interim report on early efficiency gains by the end of the year and was developing indicators for measuring the progress of reform.
57. While its humanitarian responses were successful in saving lives, the United Nations was in urgent need of resources for helping countries address their development priorities for adaptation to climate change, conflict resolution and other matters. Successful development work also depended on governments having strong institutions and partnerships, including with the private sector. Changing mindsets regarding development issues required patience, incentives and clear plans for producing results. Results needed to be effectively reported and the Deputy Secretary-General suggested that the RBAs report on each other's results as a way of increasing their credibility.
58. While 30 percent of resident coordinator positions were open to people from outside the United Nations, the lack of external candidates showed that there was a need to make the United Nations more attractive, particularly to young people.
59. The **Chair** thanked the Deputy Secretary-General for her informative presentation and responses, which had given the participants a clearer understanding of what needed to be done.

Situation in the Sahel

60. Introducing the matter, the **Chair** said that the situation in the Sahel would serve as a test case for United Nations development system reform, an opportunity to apply the principles underlying the reform and the new structures put in place to implement it to a critical real-world situation. He then invited the Deputy Secretary-General to deliver her remarks on the subject.
61. The **Deputy Secretary-General** said that as a daughter of the Sahel she welcomed the opportunity to discuss the region, which she had visited with many heads of United Nations agencies in 2018. The Sahel was richly endowed with resources and great potential but faced enormous security, governance and economic challenges that impeded progress towards peace and development.



United Nations agencies had a collective responsibility to support the governments of the region in addressing the root causes of those problems, and the ongoing reform of the United Nations development system was instrumental in showing them how to do that at the regional level, including as a priority through the holistic and coordinated implementation of the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, approved by the Security Council in 2013 in one of the first United Nations resolutions to address explicitly the link between conflict and development. The strategy had been given a boost by the launch of the Secretary-General's 2018 UN Support Plan for the Sahel, which, based on the 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063, was aimed at improving what had been a fragmented United Nations response; improvements in that regard had been achieved but there was still an urgent need for better coordination of other actors and the strengthening of national leadership, and while external support should be provided as needed, solutions would be durable only when driven by local, national and regional actors.

62. MINUSMA and United Nations peacekeeping forces were playing a critical role in strategic governance and security through support for implementation of the peace and reconciliation agreement in Mali, for the efforts of authorities in Burkina Faso to promote local conflict prevention and resolution and forestall further deterioration of social cohesion and for efforts to make the Group of 5 (G5) Sahel Joint Force fully operational and to combat violent extremism. MINUSMA was improving its ability to protect civilians, and every day its forces put their lives on the line. The Joint Force was critical to combating armed extremist groups in a complex situation including the trafficking of people, weapons and drugs and egregious human rights abuses, and the Secretary-General was urging the Security Council to do more to support a security response involving all major players.
63. One cause of conflict was climate change, which was rendering areas uninhabitable and sparking a surge in farmer/herder conflict and insurgency, as in Nigeria where Lake Chad was drying up. The United Nations strategy was aimed at creating sustainable livelihood prospects for vulnerable populations facing hunger and poverty, including especially women, farmers, herders, fishers and young people, and it was critical for solutions to have regional and local ownership, to which end the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had produced an analysis of root causes. The strategy also aimed to improve food security and nutrition through the restoration of degraded land and sustainable management of resources; to establish efficient and diverse value chains enhancing access to profitable markets for smallholder farmers and vulnerable households; and to enhance livelihoods through derisking instruments, disaster risk reduction and integrated food security and nutrition programmes that would transform economies.
64. While initiatives in the Secretary-General's support plan had been activated in areas such as governance, energy, sustainable agriculture and resilience, more than USD 1 billion would be needed; 12 members of the Alliance for the Sahel had committed USD 9 billion for the period 2019–2023 and other funds had also been committed, but most remained unallocated, while in the meantime the insurgency gained ground every day.
65. In closing she stressed that while the Sahel faced many grave challenges there were many examples of communities working hard to improve things. There was much commitment, energy and entrepreneurship on the part of both heads of state and communities that would enable the Sahel, with the right support, to capitalize on its many assets. As Nelson Mandela had once said, things often seemed impossible until they were done.
66. The **DSRSG for MINUSMA** began her presentation by clarifying the nature of MINUSMA, explaining that the situation in Mali required an operation that could link peace negotiations, political engagement and action on improvised explosive devices (IEDs) with the United Nations Mine Action Service and other acute needs with the more long-term need for humanitarian and development assistance that would typically be the remit of a resident coordinator and humanitarian coordinator. The main aim of the DSRSG and SRSRG was to secure the conditions for



peace that would make it possible for FAO, IFAD and WFP to deliver humanitarian and development assistance, which was desperately needed by 19 million people in Mali, including refugees and internally displaced people.

67. Turning to the situation in the Sahel, she showed three maps that illustrated trends with regard to food insecurity, violent events and forced displacements, all of which were mutually reinforcing and had increased dramatically over the last ten years, with 755,000 people currently forcibly displaced in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and the Niger and violent fatalities most abundant in Mali. The root causes were a food insecurity and nutrition crisis; climate change, which all studies to date showed was severely affecting the Sahel; annual population growth of 3.6 percent that threatened to outstrip resources; and a lack of good governance offering the possibility of a dignified life. Exacerbating the situation was an increase, particularly in the previous six months, in attacks by armed groups in Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, as well as intercommunal conflict. Food insecurity was expected to afflict 3.6 million people during the 2019 lean season and could be expected to worsen as climate change, natural resource degradation and population growth fueled competition for arable land, pasture and water and further aggravated poverty.
68. Numerous United Nations, and other international and regional organizations were seeking to respond to the challenge of the Sahel, but the result was a multiplicity of 18 strategies and plans that highlighted the need to achieve synergies and efficiently and effectively implement a holistic regional programme that met individual country needs. The importance of the RBA collaboration that Member States had been calling for was thus abundantly clear, and the RBAs were heeding that call: the resident coordinators of Burkina Faso, the Niger and Mali were collaborating on programme implementation, and a large cross-border Peacebuilding Fund project was under way with the collaboration of the International Organization for Migration, while discussions were under way with the European Union on its participation.
69. Turning to Mali, whose great size posed considerable challenges, she said that in a country living under peace accords between north and south, where jihadists moving from the former to the latter posed a great threat, an important focus of the work was on ensuring that activities benefitted both regions. With no choice but to deliver, the mission had abandoned the previous security phase system, under which activities had frequently been suspended, and replaced it with one under which operations continued, albeit with special measures in place, even where the highest security phase was in effect, which was in fact most of the country, including its breadbasket. A new threat was an increase in the use of IEDs, which were often placed by children in exchange for money and recently had begun to be concealed on dead bodies. This posed yet another challenge to access, which was critical to all activities, particularly in agricultural areas.
70. The solution was to work through the integrated mission, proceeding in steps: MINUSMA first needed to work with European and Malian security forces, including the gendarmerie, to achieve reform, instilling in Malian forces a respect for civil rights and the rule of law with the aim of obviating the need for United Nations peacekeeping forces; with the social cohesion that such reform would foster would come the ability to pursue larger social and economic reforms, with FAO focused on agriculture policy, WFP working with local communities on school feeding, IFAD providing the investment necessary for youth farm employment and other agencies such as UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) working on climate change awareness and nutrition, with all working in a holistic and collaborative manner through joint programming to tackle resilience, food security, nutrition and gender in a mutually reinforcing fashion. A focus on youth was critical, and she was pleased to report on the experience of a young Malian graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who had returned to his country upon graduation to contribute his knowledge to the development of his country. It was also critical that all programming be results-based and that accountability to affected populations be at its core. To that end she emphasized the importance of each agency participating actively and effectively in the development



of each country's United Nations development assistance framework (UNDAF) and of each agency's country programme document being aligned with those of the others and with the country's own priorities.

71. Acknowledging Member States' concerns with cost and efficiency, she noted that operations in Mali were concentrated in a single United Nations centre, which was not only saving money but driving cooperation and synergies, including joint programming. Saying that the paramount duty of MINUSMA was to work for the benefit of those it was mandated to serve, she pledged that it would do so with passion and commitment, despite the great challenges it faced, and that with the support of the Member States it would succeed.
72. The **President of IFAD** opened the floor to questions and comments from participants.
73. In the statements that followed all member state representatives thanked the Deputy Secretary-General and Ms. Gasarabwe for their statements, and all welcomed the release of the RBA joint plan of action for the Sahel. Several, however, expressed regret that the plan of action had not been released further in advance of the current meeting to allow time for its careful study.
74. The representative of **Malta**, speaking on behalf of the **European regional group**, said that the Sahel had long been vulnerable to extreme poverty, food crises and climate shocks that destroyed livelihoods, depressed employment and spurred migration, instability and conflict, which in turn drove food insecurity and malnutrition in a negative spiral. Considering demographic trends, youth employment needed to be prioritized and, as the RBAs recognized, collective approaches and coordination and complementary programmes were needed if comprehensive solutions were to be found. He asked how country teams had been strengthened to cope with insecurity and what innovative solutions had been identified to avoid spill-over to other regions; what the lessons to date were; and what efforts had been made to collaborate with other actors in the region with similar objectives.
75. The representative of **Denmark**, speaking also on behalf of **Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden**, welcomed the introduction of a common United Nations agenda for the Sahel, as well as the alignment of the RBA plan of action with the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, saying that success would require all stakeholders at all levels to work collectively and that particularly in conflict settings food insecurity must be addressed in a way that bridged the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. He asked for additional information on how the RBA strategy for the Sahel would link to other strategies for the region and to national and local partners, regional organizations and other multilateral actors, as well as how it would facilitate capacity and resilience strengthening in the Sahel to ensure ownership and sustainability.
76. The representative of **Cameroon** recalled the recent meetings of the Group of 5 and the Group of 7, saying that the two groups had been criticized for falling short on the funding needed for the Sahel and for attending to their own interests rather than effectively tackling the root causes of the crisis in the Sahel. While two thirds of official development assistance for the Sahel came from the Group of 7, the overall amount was insignificant. He asked how such criticism was perceived at the United Nations.
77. The representative of **France** echoed the view of the presenters that development and security must be addressed together through enhanced coordination of all actors, saying that such was the purpose of the Sahel Alliance. The Group of 7 placed great emphasis on the Sahel, and in particular young people, as evidenced by the decisions adopted at the most recent Group of 7 summit; the adoption, with African heads of state, of a partnership agreement for the Sahel that called for stepped up efforts to achieve food security; and the adoption by Group of 7 trade ministers of a framework for decent employment for rural youth in the Sahel based on analysis undertaken by the RBAs. While welcoming the RBA plan of action for the Sahel and the collaboration for which it called, she said that more detail was needed with regard to planned actions and how impact would



be assessed. She called for Member States to support collaboration among the three RBAs, as France did in financing a joint FAO/WFP project in the Niger, and for projects to be designed to address cross-border impacts.

78. The representative of **Switzerland** said that success in the Sahel, one of the most critical parts of the world, stood on a knife edge. Funding was finite, and priority must be given to enhancing and managing the productive capacity of the natural environment to feed a growing population and to creating livelihood opportunities for young men and women. As reflected in the SDGs, achieving food security would require a coordinated approach that addressed water resource management, good governance, environmental stewardship and social inequality, among many other things. To what extent, he asked, was such multidimensional work taking place, and what were the best examples of it?
79. The representative of **Japan** thanked the principals of the RBAs for attending the seventh Tokyo International Conference on Development (TICAD 7) two weeks earlier, saying that by doing so they had raised the profile of the RBAs among world leaders. The chair's summary of a special session on peace and stability in the Sahel that took place during the conference underlined the importance of employment and the participation of women and young people in peace and development activities. Saying that agriculture and food value chains played major roles in creating job opportunities, he called on the RBAs to implement their action plan for the Sahel.
80. The representative of **Germany** expressed regret that the previous Director-General of FAO had not attended the most recent Group of 7 Summit, saying that it had been a missed opportunity to present the RBAs' joint action plan on the Sahel and that FAO needed to increase its visibility on the international stage, as the current Director-General had observed. The action plan itself, he said, required considerable additional detail, including a road map with concrete actions, outputs and timelines.
81. Thanking the RBAs, MINUSMA and all others who were working towards peace and development in his country, the representative of **Mali** said that the peace accords being negotiated would be critical because without peace there could be no security and without security there could be no development. The expansion of security "red zones" to most of his country would continue beyond its borders if nothing was done. United Nations organizations, including the RBAs in particular, therefore needed to work in concert. IFAD was already helping thousands of young people with employment, WFP was helping many communities through school feeding programmes, and they and other United Nations organizations had recently met to discuss joint action. The security situation was deteriorating rapidly, however, and he pleaded for concerted and rapid action to halt the decline.
82. Responding, the **Executive Director of WFP** said that people had been distracted by the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and had thus come to recognize the extreme gravity of the situation in the Sahel only slowly, even as ISIS had begun to establish itself there. The threat it posed extended far beyond the region, but the good news was that the people there did not want to emigrate and that it was far more effective and economical to help them in their home countries than as refugees in Europe. Its assistance to 85 million people a year gave WFP an intimate familiarity with the situation on the ground, and the last two years had seen a dramatic destabilization, with Boko Haram and Al Qaeda making their presence known and using food to recruit, such that development work was simply not possible in some areas. WFP was working hard and had expanded its cooperative activities with other agencies to provide coordinated assistance to over 800,000 people in 850 villages. A piecemeal approach would not work, however, and it was essential to rapidly implement a comprehensive and holistic strategic plan that bridged the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. To do that on the necessary scale much more funding was needed, and while some countries were providing significant funding others were not. They needed to understand that the cost of dealing with the problem promptly would be vastly less than



the cost of inaction or delayed action: while it cost USD 0.50 a day to help a person in their own country, it cost between USD 50 and 100 to help them as a refugee in Europe; similarly the cost of preventing teen pregnancy or the recruitment of hungry people by ISIS was vastly less than the cost of dealing with those problems after they had already materialized. He was talking with legislators and ministers from donor countries in an effort to raise the needed funds, and he implored Member State representatives to do the same in their own countries. The situation was urgent and would not improve absent urgent action. With concerted action, however, great improvements could be achieved. With the help of Germany and the United States of America over 100,000 hectares of fragile land had been stabilized, and with the right funding the Sahel could be stabilized.

83. Pointing for inspiration to Cambodia, which 30 years earlier had endured terrible conflict but with the help of FAO and other international organizations was currently enjoying robust growth and prosperity, the **Director-General of FAO** said that with a carefully designed strategic effort the Sahel could rise above its circumstances and thrive. He also said that training was a priority, particularly for young people, noting that agreement on measures to that end had been reached at TICAD 7. The RBAs should work with African countries to tailor the agriculture policies of the countries of the Sahel, including with regard to processing and market access. Ten percent of European aid, he felt, would shift to the RBAs. Responding to Germany, he said that his predecessor had simply been unable to attend the Group of 7 meeting owing to the demands of the transition; as for himself, he would take advantage of every invitation in order to learn as much as possible, including by meeting with developing country ministers to learn about the tailored solutions that their countries needed, and to lobby for support.
84. Mr. Lisandro Martin, **Director, West and Central Africa, IFAD**, acknowledged the Member State comments on the joint action plan for the Sahel and the further work that would be needed to finalize it, as well as the need to respect country programming and priorities, which had already yielded a number of successes. IFAD would be happy to lead work on a joint results framework, as several Member States had called for, which would be important both in terms of accountability and in guiding a cultural shift among the RBAs. He noted Member State calls for strengthening country-level collaboration and agreement on common results, which would also facilitate the coordinated collection of comparable data. He also noted calls for more RBA collaboration at the regional level, saying that the RBAs would strive to improve in that regard. As for links between the RBA action plan and existing strategies, he said that the action plan was well anchored in the United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel, in particular priorities 4 and 6, and the G5 Sahel Action Plan, in particular with regard to its resilience pillar. Finally he noted that while much more funding was needed there was also a challenge in spending existing funds owing to the difficult situation on the ground. The RBAs, with the help of Member States, needed to engage the governments of the Sahel to ensure access, thus preventing further crises and advancing development.
85. In closing, the **Chair**, speaking as the representative of Egypt, whose President was the current chair of the African Union, stressed the importance of raising awareness of the need for action in the Sahel on the world stage. Egypt, holding the Presidency of the African Union for 2019, had been working to do just that at the most recent meetings of the Group of 7 and the Group of 20 and at TICAD 7.

Collaboration on management services, focusing on ERP systems

86. Introducing the topic of ERP, Mr. Laurent Thomas, **Deputy Director-General (Operations), FAO**, said that the RBAs had made significant investments in ERP software, as had many other agencies throughout the United Nations, and that it was imperative to get the greatest possible return on them.



87. He believed that it was possible to make the RBA ERP systems more compatible with one another. As a 2015 study commissioned by the United Nations Secretariat had concluded, however, interoperability should be an enabler, not a goal, and without overarching business transformation the costs of making ERP systems compatible could outweigh its benefits.
88. Achieving synergies in the use of ERP software would require the RBAs to more closely align their administrative and operational work, which would in turn require as a prerequisite the alignment of their policies and regulations. Although the RBAs had disparate mandates, there were common administrative areas where they could seek to make their ERP systems more compatible and to work in ways that made better use of synergies. The ongoing work of the Business Innovations Group operating as part of United Nations development system reform promised to make important contributions in that regard, as it already had with the signing by most United Nations entities of a statement of mutual recognition of administrative procedures. In a similar vein, the RBAs should continue to collaborate, intensifying their efforts to develop common elements in their administrative and operational policies and processes; this could in turn facilitate the interoperability of their ERP systems, but the more important goal – as found in a 2017 FAO study – was in fact the alignment of the three agencies’ policies, processes and procedures.
89. ERP should therefore be thought of not just as software but as the way that the RBAs delivered through efficient, effective and compliant operational and administrative policies, processes and systems, and the effort to make ERP software more compatible should follow on from, and be driven by, an effort to better align the three agencies’ policies, processes and procedures and thereby achieve greater synergies.
90. Opening the floor for discussion, the **Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council** said that the topic was of particular importance to him because the incompatibility of the RBAs’ ERP systems had long constrained efforts to harmonize the three agencies’ administrative and operational activities. He suggested, given that such efforts had been under discussion for a long time, that participants might wish to limit their remarks to the concluding paragraph of the document on ERP systems, which proposed that the three agencies focus on the development of common elements in administrative and operation policies and processes. This, he said, could fuel the development of further harmonization, savings and best practices.
91. Speaking on behalf of the **European regional group**, the representative of **Malta** said that RBA system compatibility was of great importance as a means of increasing coherence, efficiency, transparency and accountability and improving the quality of funding flows. RBA action to cooperate more closely, however, had not been commensurate with the clear and longstanding calls of Member States that they do so. He asked management to highlight any activities being undertaken to complement United Nations development system reform and to achieve savings by merging back-office services.
92. The representative of **Germany** said that while the report on RBA common services revealed an impressive degree of RBA collaboration it was necessary to go beyond collaboration to create joint services in areas such as payroll and other basic administrative functions as well as oversight functions such as ethics, ombudsman and mediation services.
93. Speaking also on behalf of **Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway**, the representative of **Sweden** said that all United Nations entities should employ harmonized policies and compatible systems. He asked the principals of the three RBAs to provide an update on the United Nations strategy to improve the system-wide approach to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse, asking what had been achieved and what challenges remained.

94. The representative of **Mexico** said that the report on common services was interesting but expressed regret that it had been issued only shortly before the meeting and only in English. He also asked, given that the current meeting was not a decision-making forum, what the next steps should be in deciding whether and how the governing bodies of the RBAs should instruct the secretariats on the matters under discussion.
95. Like Mexico, the representative of **Hungary** said that while the papers prepared for the current meeting were good, they should have been circulated much earlier. He also asked for responses to the proposal by Germany, noting, as a small example of the problems caused by the RBAs' lack of compatible systems, that Member State representatives were unable to obtain WFP documents online while they were physically present at FAO headquarters. Regarding the question of next steps posed by Mexico, he said that RBA compatibility should be on the agendas of the next meetings of the governing bodies of all three agencies for the adoption of formal decisions on the matter.
96. Responding to points raised, the **President of IFAD** said that the RBA joint action plan was not currently sufficiently detailed. He proposed, as a next step regarding both the action plan and RBA collaboration, that a fleshed out version of the action plan, along with a draft proposal for better aligning the three RBAs' policies, processes and procedures as proposed by the Deputy Director-General (Operations), FAO, be discussed at an informal meeting between Member State representatives and the deputy heads of the three agencies.
97. The **Director-General of FAO** supported the idea of discussions between Member State representatives and the RBA deputy heads, saying also that his Deputy Director-Generals were fully empowered and available to speak with Member State representatives at any time.
98. Responding to Mexico's question the **Deputy Executive Director of WFP** suggested that RBA collaboration be discussed in greater depth in the Senior Consultative Group (SCG), which comprised the deputy principals of the three RBAs and met quarterly, briefing the Member States after each meeting. The next meeting would be in October 2019. Guidance from the governing bodies on how to better collaborate, he suggested, was not needed because the RBAs shared the will to improve collaboration and were already working to do so, benefitting as well from the work of the Business Innovations Group; efforts to merge oversight services, however, might indeed require such guidance since changes in those services would require approval by the separate governing bodies of the RBAs. With regard to sexual harassment and abuse he said that WFP was not merely in compliance with United Nations guidelines but was seen as a model to be emulated, whose own policy had served as the inspiration for the United Nations system-wide guidelines. In an example of effective collaboration, a system for the sharing of information had been put in place to prevent confirmed offenders terminated from one United Nations entity from being reemployed by another.
99. The representative of the **United Kingdom** welcomed the suggestion that the merger of oversight and other services be discussed by the SCG and asked that the feasibility of such a merger be analysed in the joint programme for common services proposed by the Chairperson of the IFAD Executive Board.
100. The representative of **Norway** said that inter-agency collaboration was sometimes constrained by rules; as useful as informal meetings like the current one were, therefore, it was also necessary for collaboration to be on the agendas of the meetings of the governing bodies so that they could amend the rules as necessary, for instance to implement the United Kingdom's proposal to merge oversight services.
101. The representative of the **European Union** expressed satisfaction with the proposal by IFAD and WFP to report on their efforts regarding closer collaboration in the next three or four months.



102. The **Director-General of FAO** said that as a United Nations agency FAO followed United Nations rules first and foremost; where those rules did not work well on the ground then a solution must be negotiated with the relevant governing bodies. Informal meetings served the valuable function of providing a forum for brainstorming and thus a starting point for the detailed work of reform, but consensus beyond general United Nations guidelines was difficult to achieve.
103. The **Deputy Executive Director of WFP** observed that the briefings of the RBA Member States by the SCG following its quarterly meetings offered a good opportunity for Member States to provide feedback not only on the matters reported on by the SCG but also on matters that Member States wished to see on the agendas of the formal meetings of the RBA governing bodies.

Private sector engagement and potential strategy coherence

104. Introducing the item on private sector engagement and potential strategy coherence, the **Chair** noted that the subject had been under active discussion by the RBA governing bodies for several years, that WFP was developing a related strategy, that IFAD had recently adopted one and that FAO had adopted one and regularly worked through private sector partnerships to support governments. It was thus beneficial to discuss the subject at a joint meeting of the RBAs, which it was hoped could inspire greater synergies among them.
105. Ms Thouraya Triki, **Director, Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division, IFAD**, gave a presentation on the RBAs' approaches to engaging and working with the private sector to best support governments' efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting both differences in those approaches and areas for potential future collaboration. As outlined in the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the importance of the private sector as a development partner lay in the funding needed to achieve the SDGs, which for SDG 2 alone was estimated at USD 180 billion. Thus, private sector funding and expertise would be vital as a complement to government action and funding.
106. Each of the RBAs had its own approach to building partnerships with businesses, foundations and individuals, and to addressing the risks posed by such partnerships.
107. FAO sought to engage with regard to the development of technical programmes, benefitting from private sector technical expertise, funding and data and information sharing; policy dialogue through which private sector expertise informed multi-stakeholder processes; advocacy and communication activities to improve public awareness of FAO's mandate; and agricultural investment, benefitting from private sector know-how, expert services and in-kind and financial contributions. Its approach included a robust risk management process aimed at protecting its reputation, and an evaluation of the approach would be presented in November 2019.
108. WFP was currently finalizing a strategy for partnership and engagement with non-governmental entities, encompassing businesses, foundations and individuals, based on the premise that such partnership and engagement must be need-based, maximize local impact, support effective long-term engagement, ensure transparency and accountability and promote innovative problem solving and increased impact for beneficiaries. The strategy would focus on "impact" through partnerships offering expertise and skills to strengthen WFP and local government capacities; income, through enhanced fundraising; and innovation, by capitalizing on private sector entities' strengths in that regard.



109. IFAD's private sector strategy, recently approved by its Executive Board, had as its two main objectives to mobilize private funding for and investment in rural micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and small-scale agriculture and to expand markets and increase incomes and job opportunities for targeted groups. Action in four areas would include deployment of a financial instrument to catalyse private funding; the use of loans and grants to support government efforts to identify private sector investment opportunities; promotion of the development of inclusive value chains; and the testing and scaling up of new technologies and cost-effective solutions.
110. Thus, each RBA had a distinct approach to the private sector, driven by its mandate, and distinct things to offer it. FAO could facilitate participation in processes to establish codes of conduct and align domestic standards with international standards, making it easier to do business; WFP could enhance its impact in working towards zero hunger through capacity-strengthening and innovation; and IFAD offered a proven track record in organizing small-scale farmers, strengthening their capacity and improving their access to markets and services, thus reducing the risks posed to private sector investors. Notwithstanding their differing circumstances the three RBAs saw value in deeper collaboration and were discussing it actively with regard to sharing learning and best practices; coordination of due diligence processes; modalities of engagement such as innovative and blended financing; and encouraging corporate social responsibility and related international guidance such as the Committee on World Food Security's principles for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems.
111. The three agencies would continue to share information and experiences and work to enhance their collaboration, particularly in the areas outlined above.
112. The **Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council** opened the floor to questions and comments from participants.
113. The representative of **Hungary** said that the private sector strategies of the RBAs should respect the principles of full transparency, accountability and the need for assessment of their impact. Saying that the latter two required no particular comment, he asked whether the RBA principals saw any reason that information about their private sector partnerships, including the identities of the partners, the main provisions of the partnership agreements, their financial implications and the amount of money involved, could not be uploaded to the Member State areas of the three agencies' websites. He said he was confident that the private sector partners would provide any necessary consent to this sharing of information and that it would be a cause for concern if they did not because the partnerships did pose a potential risk to the agencies' reputations.
114. The representative of **Burkina Faso** asked whether in her presentation the Director, Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division, IFAD, was speaking of the private sector in donor countries or in the countries where the RBAs were working.
115. The representative of the **Republic of Korea** said that there was a need for more detailed information on the private sector strategies of the three RBAs, for example regarding how they would combine their efforts while at the same time clearly distinguishing themselves and their mandates from one another in the eyes of potential donors.
116. Responding, the **Director, Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division, IFAD**, acknowledged that there was a need for full transparency and reporting as the private sector strategies were implemented. Regarding the scope of the private sector, she said that that was described in the strategies themselves and included actors in both donor and recipient countries playing various roles. Foundations and multinationals, for example, could provide technology, know-how, funding and expanded markets, while smallholders, cooperatives and rural small and medium-sized enterprises would normally receive assistance.



117. The **Executive Director of WFP** said that hunger and poverty could not be defeated without the private sector. He proposed that two or three world-class corporations from developed countries be asked to assess what they would need to invest in each country needing assistance with the aim of operating profitably. That, he said, was the sort of approach that could transform countries, and resident coordinators needed to be retrained to think in such terms, to work with small, medium-sized and large firms to address the barriers to their investment and how the United Nations system could help to dismantle them. He had taken just such an approach as the Governor of the State of North Carolina, and government's role had been to create the atmosphere in which business could thrive by improving education, training and infrastructure. He asked developed country representatives to do the same in their countries, identifying companies that could invest in developing countries and working to identify what would make it possible for them to do so. Such an approach might not work in areas of great conflict but there were many places where it would; getting the private sector to invest and hire more people was probably the single greatest practical step that could be taken.
118. The **Director-General of FAO** said that the RBAs needed to alter their view of risk. Staff needed guidelines and risk needed to be managed, but it was also necessary to view risk as something that had positive aspects and carried with it the potential for "profit with risk". To be too risk averse was to throw out the baby with the bathwater. In response to Hungary he said that it was essential for the RBAs to ensure that their private sector partnerships were results-oriented and adhered to certain principles. The possibility of sharing the details of such partnerships should be agreed upon at the outset of any collaboration and spelled out in the documents formalizing it, but as partners benefitted from their collaboration with United Nations agencies they could be expected to agree. Whatever form collaboration might take, the important thing was to learn from experience and to do what worked.

2018–2019 RBA award of excellence for best country-level collaboration

119. The **Chair** said that the award of excellence for best country-level collaboration was awarded every two years to country teams that spearheaded effective and innovative collaboration to maximize progress towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by capitalizing on the comparative strengths of the three agencies. The award for 2018–2019 was given to the Guatemala country team, on whose behalf it was accepted by Mr Juan Diego Ruiz Cumplido, Subregional Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean, IFAD; Ms Laura Melo, Guatemala Country Director, WFP; and Mr Diego Recalde León, Guatemala Country Representative, FAO.

Closure of the meeting

120. Recalling the adage that "all roads lead to Rome", the **Chair** suggested that the road to food security and defeating hunger should *start* in Rome. He then adjourned what he described as a constructive and intense meeting at 5.15 p.m., expressing confidence that the discussions during the meeting would further strengthen RBA collaboration.