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Y LA ALIMENTACION

منظمة  
الأمم  
والتعاون  
للزراعة  
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Your Ref: MOPAN 2005/00007

- 7 APR 2005

Dear Mr Brun,

Please find enclosed the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) summarized principal comments with regards to the Synthesis Report on the 2004 Survey of the Multilateral Organizations Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN).

These reflections are in response to your generous offer to provide comments in writing to the conclusions of the report. It is my understanding that these, together with the report, will be published on the MOPAN website.

It would be appreciated if you could also share these comments with the other members of the MOPAN.

May I reiterate my particular thanks to the Government of Norway for its continued support to FAO.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Henri Carsalade  
Assistant Director-General  
Technical Cooperation Department

Mr Aslak Brun  
Assistant Director General  
Department for Global Issues  
Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Oslo

cc: Ms Margaret Slettevold  
Minister Counsellor  
Permanent Representative of  
the Kingdom of Norway to FAO  
Royal Norwegian Embassy  
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ADVANCE

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Ms Gunnvor Berge  
Executive Officer  
Department for Global Issues  
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## Synthesis Report on the 2004 Survey of the Multilateral Organizations Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN)

### Some reflections from the side of FAO<sup>1</sup>

#### **Introduction**

The openness of the eight bilateral donors (together representing about one-quarter of voluntary contributions to FAO) in sharing the findings of the MOPAN initiative to review perceptions of FAO performance in providing "*support to national policies and institutions, as well as participation in aid coordination activities and other partnerships*" in its areas of mandate is appreciated. It is noted that the report is based on interviews with donor representations in selected countries and that it records impressions rather than objective analysis. Nevertheless it is considered that the findings offer valuable insights into how the work of the Organization is viewed from the outside. On the strength of signals from the MOPAN Survey report, FAO has established a Task Force on Harmonization and Alignment to enhance its proactive participation in the changing aid environment. It is suggested that the co-sponsors complement MOPAN's initial findings with other assessments, including from the perspective of recipient countries.

#### **Visibility at country level**

Given that the assessment of FAO's work at country level was reportedly affected by the "*limited degree of interaction between FAO and the MOPAN country teams*" (i.e. the embassies), it is recalled that the Organization's limited visibility probably reflects the lower profile of the agriculture ministries with which it does most of its work. By contrast, the other two agencies included in the 2004 MOPAN assessment (the African Development Bank (AfDB) and UNDP) interact more with planning and finance ministries that have, by definition, higher profiles. The technical rather than funding mission of FAO would, in any case, tend to limit opportunities to influence government macro-policies and priorities. Within the context of food and agriculture, however, FAO country representatives do not limit their contacts to the sectoral ministry but also work with other stakeholders and with other ministries and donors that have a sectoral interest. FAO representatives have been instructed to step up such interactions and the ideas of donors on how such interaction can be improved would be welcome.

Visibility at country level is, however, not an end in itself but should be enhanced in order to facilitate coordinated action for development, including support to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, two initiatives may be highlighted:

- the delegation to FAO country representations of increased field programme responsibilities, including liaison with funding sources. These expanded responsibilities will stimulate FAO's interaction with local partners both donor and host-country;
- the implementation of FAO's cross-organizational strategy on "*communicating FAO's messages*", as reflected in the Strategic Framework for FAO 2000-2015 and in the Medium-Term Plan 2002-2007 but with more specific activities at country-level, including heightened FAO participation in advocacy and policy dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup> This note summarizes the principal comments offered from the side of FAO in recent informal discussions with MOPAN members.

### ***Strong government focus***

FAO is presented as having a "*strong focus on governments as its main partners*" and as having restricted interaction with non-state actors; this is perceived as hampering a broader partnership strategy at country level. This strong focus on governments reflects the call of the Organization's Basic Texts for it "*to furnish technical assistance as governments may request*" (Article I, 3) but is not incompatible with FAO playing a facilitating role in government collaboration with other national stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector that FAO also has contacts with. To encourage this further, the 32<sup>nd</sup> Session of the FAO Conference in December 2003 approved new instruments for so-called *Partnership in Development Projects*, which FAO is in the process of operationalizing.

### ***Participation in aid coordination***

Although FAO is considered to be "*an active participant in inter-agency coordination efforts on specific issues*", the Organization is "*generally seen as a willing but minor actor in broader coordination efforts*". By definition, since FAO is not a donor, it cannot in matters of aid coordination aspire to a role equivalent to the other two institutions surveyed - AfDB and UNDP. Furthermore, FAO operates as part of the UNDP-coordinated UN Country Team within which the collective voice is that of the UNDP-based UN Resident Coordinator.

The above said, the Organization plays its part in adhering to commonly-accepted frameworks for development interventions, key among them the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Common Country Assessments, and UN Development Assistance Frameworks. With increasing prominence being given to harmonization and alignment at the country level, FAO's proactive stance in the context of UN Country Team activities is expected to develop further.

Limited human and financial resources at country-office level indeed prevent FAO from fully developing its supportive role in all the above mentioned areas. The suggestion of the MOPAN Survey that FAO should strengthen its collaboration with donors to overcome these constraints is therefore appreciated; this should ideally be supported by access to earmarked donor funding for FAO involvement in broader development initiatives under new "programmatic" funding modalities, such as the direct budget support increasingly favoured by donors. Ensuring attention to this would benefit both the recipient countries and their donor partners as they could maintain access to the accumulated knowledge and experience of specialized agencies such as FAO.

It would be a good investment for donors to provide adequate resources to the UN system so that it can work in a coherent way rather than being driven by scarcity of funding to the competition for donor funds that leads to atomization of initiatives. In this context, FAO could proactively contribute to support for country-level aid coordination in terms of:

- conceptual contributions, including all aspects of the policy dialogue with government and other partners, drawing on normative work and best practice;
- supporting national leadership in convening and managing critical meetings with all stakeholders;
- capacity building; and
- limited co-funding of unprogrammed but critical technical and/or policy assistance through its Technical Cooperation Programme.