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Rome, 25 July 2003

Dear Mr. Desai,

I wish to refer to your letter of 16 June 2003 in which you seek FAO's contribution to the Secretary-General's report pursuant to General Assembly Resolution 56/110 of 14 December 2001 entitled "Economic assistance to the Eastern European States affected by the developments in the Balkans".

Please find attached a note describing FAO's assistance activities in the countries concerned. I hope that the contribution can be included in its entirety in the Secretary-General's report on the subject to the General Assembly.

I trust you will find this information useful and remain at your disposal for any further assistance in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Manfredo Incisa di Camerana
Assistant Director-General
Special Adviser to the Director-General

Mr Nitin Desai
Under-Secretary General
for Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations
New York

cc: Ms Florence Chenoweth
Director
LONY
New York

Briefing Note

FAO's Assistance Activities to the Eastern European States Affected by the Developments in the Balkans¹

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has provided emergency and development assistance to the affected countries in South-Eastern Europe since 1994. In response to the emergencies faced, FAO's emergency department (TCE) has implemented agricultural interventions in **Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo Province, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Serbia & Montenegro** (formerly Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), in total around 90 projects for some US\$75 million. The overwhelming majority of interventions (87 percent) focused on the provision and delivery of agricultural inputs, whereas the remainder was used to improve the coordination of emergency agricultural interventions and to strengthen the institutional capacity of government institutions to assess the damages inflicted on the agricultural sector and improve preparedness. Approximately three-quarters of all project funds were disbursed in Kosovo Province and Bosnia & Herzegovina reflecting the massive scale of the damages that resulted from the crises in these areas.

Initially, activities concentrated on emergency assistance to **Bosnia & Herzegovina** through the distribution of agricultural inputs to war-affected farmers. Some 29 emergency projects for a total amount of US\$20.7 million were implemented. Subsequently, FAO assisted the Government in formulating agriculture and forestry rehabilitation projects for World Bank funding for a total amount of US\$90.8 million. In 1998, FAO financed under its Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) the formulation of a Medium-term Agriculture Sector Strategy for Bosnia & Herzegovina (US\$396 000). Since May 2000, FAO has been implementing a soils inventory project (US\$1 million), financed by the Government of Italy and recently Norway has provided funds for implementing a project to establish a fish hatchery in support of vulnerable groups (war invalids and IDPs) and for non-farm income generation.

From July 1999, FAO has focused its emergency operations in the Balkans to **Kosovo** in order to assist returnees and internally displaced persons in recommencing agricultural production activities. To date, a total of 35 emergency assistance projects have been implemented, representing an expenditure of US\$40 million. In order to implement the emergency operations an Emergency Coordination Unit was established and managed by TCE. This clearly demonstrated FAO's capacity to effectively assume a leading coordination role to support the overall relief and rehabilitation of the agricultural sector. Moreover, under its leadership an assistance programme is being prepared with an emphasis on rehabilitation and development of the province. Currently, there is one on-going project and approval for two projects is pending (on-going: Strategy on Education and Training for Agriculture and Rural Development (ETARD), US\$258,000; pending: Support Unit for Rural Sector Development, US\$500,000 and Pilot Project on Resettlement of Minorities and Confidence Building between Minorities and Albanian Communities in Kosovo, US\$450,000).

Following the political changes in **Serbia & Montenegro** at the end of 2000, FAO provided emergency assistance through the delivery of seed, fertilizer and animal feed to needy farmers in central and southern parts of Serbia. In addition, an FAO Emergency Coordination Unit in Belgrade is coordinating the support for agricultural relief and rehabilitation assistance. A total of 10 emergency and development projects for the amount of US\$7.1 million have been

¹ Update to the "Report of the Secretary General" (A/56/632), paragraphs 31-36 ; status as of July 2003.

implemented, of which six are ongoing activities (US\$5.3 million). The current assistance is focused on supporting refugee integration through agriculture activities and supporting economic revitalisation by improving fruit production, assistance to livestock farmers, integrated pest management (maize), and institutional development and capacity building in the forestry sector.

During the Kosovo crisis, FAO emergency assistance was given to rural families in the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia** who were supporting and hosting Kosovar refugee families (six projects for US\$4.8 million). In the light of the 2001 developments in the **Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, FAO drew up an emergency programme, taking into account the impact of the massive population displacements on agricultural activities. Based on experience gathered in Kosovo and Serbia & Montenegro, an Emergency Coordination Office was also established in Skopje and the activities undertaken comprised support for the development of an appropriate prevention and emergency preparedness strategy, provision of agricultural inputs (wheat and potato seeds and fertilizer) and projects focused on rehabilitation and development activities for some US\$4.2 million (seven projects). With the support of the Emergency Coordination Office a development programme is currently being elaborated, including support to the forestry sector (capacity building, forest inventory), state veterinary services, and participatory rural development planning at municipality level.

In addition to the above-mentioned large-scale assistance activities, since 1999 FAO also provided development support to **Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Hungary, Moldova and Slovakia**.

As **Ukraine** is still not a member of FAO, it has not benefited from any assistance activities through FAO in relation to the Balkan crisis.

Some recently concluded and on-going projects in these countries are highlighted in the following section.

In **Albania**, assistance concerns modernization of the agriculture sector, food security and forestry development (US\$9.3 million). In **Bulgaria**, FAO formulated a strategy for agricultural development and food security (concluded 1999), and is currently supporting two technical assistance projects; one project is designed for the improvement of walnut production and the second for capacity building for sustainable delivery of agribusiness advice to market-oriented farmers (US\$0.5 million). Currently, **Croatia** is being supported in the elaboration of a rural development strategy aiming at facilitating the EU accession process and the development of a certification system for environmentally friendly farming (US\$0.7 million). **Romania** has benefited from a programme in support of plant genetic resources, a project for elaborating a strategy for agriculture and rural development, support to grassland management in mountainous areas and use of remote sensing for the agricultural reform process (US\$0.7 million). **Hungary** had in recent years received support for the preparation of a forestry and rural development plan (US\$0.3 million), further projects are under preparation. In **Moldova**, FAO is currently active in supporting the implementation of modern small-scale on-farm irrigation technologies after successfully completing activities in support of the wine production sector, assistance to the National Codex Committee, developing a strategy for grain production and several emergency projects related to natural disasters (US\$1.6 million). **Slovakia**, together with Hungary on the brink of becoming a member of the European Union (May 2004), benefited (US\$0.3 million) from support to the forestry sector (protection of spruce stands) and to the EU accession process.

As members of the **Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC)**, **Albania, Bulgaria, Moldova and Romania** are benefiting from an FAO technical assistance project with the

objective of institutional strengthening to facilitate intra- and inter-regional agricultural trade. Other currently ongoing regional projects where these countries are included refer to assistance for control of transboundary diseases of livestock, a training programme on meat inspection and meat technology, and conservation of the "Pinzgau" cattle breed.

FAO's role in rehabilitation and reconstruction of the agriculture sector in the Balkans was discussed at the FAO Regional Conference for Europe, held in Portugal in July 2000. In defining its activities in the European region, FAO gives particular attention to the following priorities: (a) poverty reduction through support to sustainable rural livelihoods and food security; (b) food safety and quality; (c) sustainable management of natural resources; and (d) institutional capacity-building to support the process of transition to a market economy in the rural sector. Furthermore, of importance for development in the Balkans were the Pan-European Conference for Food Safety and Food Quality, held in Budapest in February 2002, where issues such as harmonization and development of food safety and quality policies, improvement of consumer participation in food safety and quality issues, strengthening of surveillance and monitoring of food safety risks, and extension of food safety emergency systems were discussed. In addition, at the FAO Regional Conference for Europe, held in Cyprus in July 2002, continuing support to the Balkan countries was reiterated by FAO's European Member States.