

170th Session of the Council

Sub-Item 9.5: Report of the 36th session of the Regional Conference of the Near East (Baghdad, Iraq, Senior Officers Meeting 10-13 January 2022 and Ministerial Meeting 7-8 February 2022)

I am pleased to present the salient highlights of the Report of the 36th Session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC 36). The Conference was comprised of a Senior Officers Meeting, which was convened in virtual modality from 10 -13 January 2022, followed by a hybrid Ministerial Meeting, which was held from 7 - 8 February 2022 in Baghdad, Iraq.

Focusing on the theme of “Transforming agrifood systems to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Near East and North Africa”, the Senior Officers Meeting deliberated on the four central Regional Priorities, namely (i) Rural transformation for youth employment and income, (ii) Transforming agrifood systems to promote healthy diets for all, (iii) Greening agriculture and (iv) Building resilience for food security and nutrition, as well as on the cross-cutting issue of gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment in the Near East and North Africa region.

The Ministerial Meeting conducted its deliberations through three ministerial roundtables, exploring the linkages between the four Regional Priorities and the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31.

I would like to take this opportunity to summarize, for the Council’s attention, **the key outcomes related to programme and budget matters emanating from NERC 36:**

Following discussion of the results and priorities for FAO in the Near East and North Africa region, Members endorsed the proposed programme of work aimed at pursuing the implementation of the four Regional Priorities, whilst addressing the accelerators and cross-cutting themes with a view to delivering on the FAO corporate strategies and initiatives. Members also supported the proposals to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the Regional Office. In this connection, the Regional Conference further called upon Members and FAO to work together towards achieving the objectives set in the programme through strengthened cooperation, a well-articulated strategy to foster multi-stakeholder partnerships and the progressive transition from a project approach to a programmatic approach.

Moreover, the Regional Conference endorsed the Multi-year Programme of Work 2022-25 for the Near East Regional Conference. The Regional Conference commended the inclusive process outlined in the roadmap of the FAO Science and Innovation Strategy. Members recommended that FAO consider certain elements in the formulation of the Strategy, notably the specificities of local contexts and the disparities between countries in the region, facilitating access and technology transfer and in particular intellectual property rights, capitalising on local knowledge and attributing attention to the role of small producers, women and youth.

The Regional Conference also welcomed the development of the new Strategy on Climate Change and urged for greater consideration to be attributed in its finalization to regional and local contexts, situations and needs. The important role of science, technology and innovation in addressing the impact of climate change on agrifood systems and fostering adaptation was emphasized. The Regional Conference recognized in this connection the

opportunity presented by the 27th and 28th Sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (COP 27 and COP 28), to be hosted by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates respectively, to accelerate action on climate change and maximize access to climate finance in agrifood sectors. Members were called upon to participate actively in the regional consultation on the Strategy on Climate Change and to provide inputs on regional and country needs and priorities on climate change and agrifood systems.

Finally, as there were no official candidatures presented to host the 37th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East, the Conference called upon the Near East Regional Group to discuss and agree on the date, place, Chairperson and Vice-Chairpersons of the 37th Session, in consultation with the Director-General, prior to the end of the year.

Thank you and I am happy to respond to any questions you may have.

His Excellency Muhammad Karim Al-Khafaji, Chairperson of the 36th Session of the Regional Conference for the Near East (NERC 36)