

**Working methods of the Executive Board
Background paper**

I. Background

1. By its decision 2003/14, the Executive Board requested the Bureau to enter into dialogue with representatives of other United Nations funds, programmes and organizations to explore approaches to improving working methods and to report its findings and any recommendation back to the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2004.
2. The Executive Board also invited representatives of the Bureau of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme (WFP) to attend its first regular session of 2004 to provide a briefing on their efforts to establish a broad-ranging and participatory process for improving their own working methods.
3. Both aspects of the decision are parts of an ongoing dialogue started in 2002 when the Executive Board held informal discussions on its overall working methods, including arrangements for field visits.

II. Actions taken

4. Following the adoption of decision 2003/14, the following actions have been taken:
 - a) The President of the WFP Executive Board has been invited and agreed to attend the first regular session of 2004 to report on the Board's ongoing process to improve its working methods;
 - b) The Secretary of the UNICEF Executive Board, together with the Secretary of UNDP/UNFPA Board, attended the October session of the WFP Executive Board. In addition to providing an opportunity for the UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA Secretaries to have better understanding of the working methods of the WFP Board, and their possible relevance to UNICEF, parallel meetings of the three Secretaries during this visit enabled a useful exchange of information and lessons learned about best practices;

- c) The Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board organized a one-day briefing session for new Board members. This session was attended by all new Board members and by many other delegations. Its aim was to brief delegates on UNICEF (its history, structure, programmes, funding, human resources), on the Executive Board (rules of procedures, working methods) and on the agenda of the first regular session. The feedback received from delegates was very positive, as they considered the briefing to be very useful, and they raised important questions. It was generally agreed that the organization of this briefing should become part of the working methods;
 - d) Institutionalization of a monthly Bureau meeting;
 - e) Within the secretariat, there have been ongoing internal discussions to improve the contents of the background papers prepared for oral reports, which should focus on policy issues and challenges;
 - f) The three secretariats facilitated an early decision by the all three Boards on the agenda of the joint Board meeting and on the destination for the joint field visit. The UNICEF secretariat has been put in charge of coordinating and organizing the 2004 joint field visit and the WFP secretariat is coordinating the joint Board meeting;
 - g) Confirmation of the need to continue the practice of informal consultations in order to brief delegations, to provide a forum for informal exchanges, and to build consensus on strategic issues, etc.;
 - h) Confirmation of the need to continue to improve documentation. While the timely availability and conciseness of documents have been greatly improved, efforts need to continue on improving the quality of documents, in order to provide focused, substantive and action-oriented documents.
5. The Board also may wish to consider examining the term of office of Bureau members. The rules of procedures of the UNDP/UNFPA Board offer the possibility for members of the Bureau (except the President) to be eligible for a second consecutive term and there are recent cases of implementation of this rule. This is worth considering because if it were to become the practice of the UNICEF Board as well, it could contribute to greater institutional memory and continuity within the Bureau.