



Statement on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States

174th session of the FAO Council

(4-8 December 2023)

REVISED DRAFT

Item 8: Report of the Joint Meeting of the 137th Session of the Programme Committee and the 198th Session of the Finance Committee (6-10 November 2023)

Madam/Mr Chair,

1. I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.
2. [XXX, XXXX, XXXX align themselves with this statement.]
3. We would like to start by thanking the chair of the Joint Meeting, Ms Yael Rubinstein, for her excellent leadership in guiding the Joint Meeting and the good collaboration between the members of the committees.
4. We support the recommendations made by the Joint Meeting with respect to the adjustments to the Programme of Work and Budget.
5. We welcome the progress made on the implementation of integrated water resources management, and more generally FAO's increased attention to the role of water throughout its programmes and policies. Water is pivotal for sustainable food systems, and sustainable food systems are critical for the realisation of the UN Water Action Agenda.
6. On the follow-up to the UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment, we support the approach taken by the Hub to complement – rather than duplicate – existing structures and to work closely with resident coordinators and UN country teams in supporting the implementation of countries' national pathways. A food systems approach is proving to be a welcome analytical tool for many countries in their journey towards food systems that are more sustainable, inclusive and capable of ensuring food and nutritional security.

7. We commend FAO for the continued improvements on policies and initiatives with a holistic approach focusing on the prevention of any form of harassment and sexual misconduct, as well as the promotion and strengthening of means of reporting allegations. We also commend FAO for its focus on achieving cultural change, which is key to combating harassment and misconduct in the long term, in line with the zero-tolerance policy. On that note, we encourage the organisation to address the key drivers of harassment and sexual misconduct, as laid out in the next step. Indeed, harassment and sexual misconduct is devastating for the individuals involved and prevention is key to reducing the risks.

8. Finally, we appreciate the added value of having a joint meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees. Members of the committees gain insights from each others' perspectives on the agenda items that overlap. We have noted with interest the proposal to improve the interaction between the committees through an adjusted schedule and look forward to its implementation.

9. With a view to the findings of the Finance Committee, we would like to further discuss the roll-over of cost recovery income in order to financially support management costs in 2024/25. We have to bear in mind that cost recovery is money that other agencies, funds and programmes (contributed by Member States) pay to the organisation, so any reserves belong to Member States and should be paid back. Subsidising administrative costs is not a sustainable solution, but a disadvantage for other (UN) entities.

10. With these comments, the European Union and its Member States endorse the Report of the Joint Meeting of the 137th Session of the Programme Committee and the 198th Session of the Finance Committee.

Thank you, Mr Chair.
