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y la
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TWENTY-SIXTH FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Merida, Mexico, 10-14 April 2000

ESTABLISHMENT OF A SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE FOR CENTRAL AMERICA

1. The establishment of a Sub-Regional Office for Central America was requested by the delegations of several Member Nations from the sub-region at the 23rd and 24th Regional Conferences for Latin America and the Caribbean (San Salvador, 1994; Asunción, 1996)¹. The 25th Regional Conference (Nassau, 1998) "reaffirmed the importance of establishing a Subregional Office for Central America and renewed its request that FAO look into such a possibility"².
2. To support their requests, the countries concerned have stressed the specific characteristics of Central American agriculture and its particular importance for their social and economic life. Agricultural production contributes to 17.5% of the GDP of the sub-region, a percentage higher than in other regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, and agriculture-based exports represent 65% of total foreign earnings. Central American agriculture is highly vulnerable to climatic risks and natural catastrophes, and has a direct influence on food security and access to food by large segments of the population in most of the countries of the sub-region.
3. It should be noted that the establishment of a Sub-Regional Office requires the assignment of appropriate technical staff and has important implications for the regular budget of the Organization, in addition to the significant costs to be met by specific financial and in-kind contributions of the host country.

¹ LARC/94/REP, para. 46; LARC/96/REP, para. 27

² LARC/98/REP, para. 57

4. Responding to the requests of the Central American countries, the Director-General submitted to the consideration of the FAO Conference, at its 28th Session (20-31 October 1995), a draft supplementary appropriations resolution to fund a number of important activities not covered by the effective working budget, including up to US\$ 2 million to finance the costs of establishing sub-regional offices in the Middle East and Central America³. However, the draft resolution was not adopted by the Conference, in view of difficulties to reach a consensus on the items proposed therein.⁴

5. The opportunity and feasibility of the establishment of a Sub-Regional Office for Central America is therefore a matter to be decided by the Member Nations at the FAO Conference, including the necessary provisions in the Regular Programme of Work and Budget to cover professional staff and other costs that could not be met by the host country.

³ C95/3, para. 55

⁴ C95/REP, para. 116