

## **CSO STATEMENT TO THE 30<sup>th</sup> FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA**

**22-23 January 2018**

Honourable Chairperson, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates and Observers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

We, the 36 representatives of small and medium-scale farmers, rural women and youth, fisherfolk, agricultural workers, livestock keepers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples, landless peoples, consumers, and NGOs representing national, regional and international CSOs coming from 23 countries met in Khartoum, Sudan, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2018 for the CSO consultation in line with this 30<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Africa.

We recognize the efforts of FAO to support this opportunity for civil society to collectively debate on our relationship, challenges and our demands to FAO and its members countries, as well as the opportunity to discuss the pertinent issues in the Regional Conference Agenda.

Although we regret the absence of a clear focus on rural women and girls within the Agenda of this Regional Conference for Africa, we welcome FAO's ongoing initiatives to promote sustainable production systems, food systems that enhance rural economies and society as a whole, the professional insertion of Youth in the agricultural sectors, the protection and promotion of Biodiversity and the increasing climate resilience.

Notwithstanding the will and efforts of FAO, the efficient and sustainable implementation of the recommendations from the previous consultation remains for us an important concern. Moreover, many recommendations made so far have still not been taken into consideration at national, sub-regional and regional levels

We appreciate the common efforts of CSOs, UN organizations and Governments to declare the Decade of Family Farming which was adopted in November 2017 by the UN General Assembly.

However, we note the persistence or emergence of some challenges that threatens the hopes engaged by ongoing initiatives:

- Our governments still pursue contradictory actions actively sponsoring the grabbing and destruction of our lands, soils, forests, water sources, genetic biodiversity and other resources, as well as the livelihood of our constituencies; causing, with complicity, the wide spread waves of forced evictions; allowing for an accelerated corporate capture of our democratic processes; and by eroding the transparency and accountability of our governmental programs and institutions.

- Hunger and malnutrition continues to be endemic in Africa taking into consideration that although governments have largely recognized the right to food and nutrition, most of them have not taken serious and consistent actions to internalize these rights within their national constitutions and legislations. At the same time, the ratification of the Optional protocol to the international covenant on economic, social and cultural rights remains ignored.
- The multiplication and intensification of socio-political conflicts, armed and unarmed, including terrorism, which are severely affecting access to production basins, mobility and intraregional trade, and by consequence obstructing and even spoiling food and nutritional security strategies, efforts and actions.
- Lack of political will and failure in implementation of policies aimed at maximizing the potential and inclusion of Youth entering the labour market at a rate of 20 million yearly, compounding on the already unfavourable living conditions of African Youth, leading to increasingly complex and convoluted reasons for migration and rural exodus.
- The lack of consideration in existing public policies relating to some of the main strategic production sectors which are the source of livelihood and identity of a significant portion of African societies such as fisheries, pastoralism and forestry. This considerably hinders living conditions, undermines current poverty reduction strategies, and hampers efforts to diversify income sources at local level.
- The persistence and intensification of the persecution and criminalization of Human Rights defenders across the Continent, as well as the absence of strong national legislation protecting their rights.

As such, and following our discussions during the 2 days of the Civil Society consultation, **we strongly urge for the following from our governments:**

1. Put an end to resource grabbing affecting farming, fisheries, forests, and pastoralist communities, and move towards an equitable management of these resources (natural, material, financial) by strengthening community rights, benefit sharing policies, and enacting strong and binding legislations. In particular we call for the inclusion of the Right to Food and Nutrition into the Constitution and other legislations, and ratification of the Optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and that our governments enact legal frameworks and regulations to guarantee the right to free, prior and informed consent.
2. Develop and/or adopt policies to establish and protect pastoral systems, and support community self-governing strategies over natural and pastoral resources, to ensure harmonious coexistence conditions between farmers and pastoralists.
3. Prove their commitment to the sustainable management of natural resources and protection of the interests of local communities by

developing and/or putting in place appropriate legislative frameworks and regulations based on the relevant and existing legal instruments such as the UN declaration for indigenous peoples, the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the responsible Governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests in the context of National food security, Right to Food Guidelines of CFS, UN Peasant rights declaration, UN binding treaty on Transnational corporations, etc.

4. Systematize the formalization agricultural sectors through implementing conventions and policies promoting and protecting food systems through a new food governance systems. This will value procurement and consumption of local products, and the mobilization of appropriate budgets for financing agriculture to bring responsive and responsible investment to rural and agriculture infrastructure.
5. Regulate the activities of Transnational corporations, and be themselves held accountable for their complicity and/or complacency with abuses and violations of Human Rights, with especial attention to ensure that women rights' impact assessments are made compulsory for any support of large scale agricultural projects, in accordance with Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and General Recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of Rural Women.
6. Forge stronger and more sustained mechanisms to ensure youth participation and inclusion in policies formulation processes at the various levels, and harmonize policies directly or indirectly pertaining to youth issues. This must be accompanied by the allocation of resources for the financing of agriculture, value addition and services and rural development by increasing responsible investment and improving infrastructure.
7. Develop legislation that ensures the protection and well-being of human rights defenders. Where a legal framework already exists, governments must commit to enforcing these frameworks and avoid any action that might lead to the infringement of the rights of human-rights defender, and criminalization of their legitimate actions.
8. Take assertive steps towards long-lasting peace and security of our societies, and ensure effective functioning of legal provisions and mechanisms for holding war-mongering individuals accountable. Additionally, governments must put in place effective strategies to assist and support conflict-affected displaced communities, as well as those returning to their territories, with an aim to accelerate the recovery of their livelihoods and well-being.
9. We make a special motion to the governments to create and allow the conditions for small-scale food producers to organize themselves freely and autonomously, as well as providing them with the necessary conditions for legal registration of their organizations to fulfill their union and development missions.

Furthermore, **we strongly call for the following from the FAO:**

10. Develop resilient and sustainable intensification policies' instruments, guidelines to combat land and forestry degradation, such as using the AU framework on pastoralism to influence governments towards effective actions and CSO capacity building to promote exchange of experience practice and strategies.
11. Develop policies and strategies to support the agroecological transition within food systems, and ensure adaptation and mitigation of climate change by strengthening the capacity of CSO networks and public institutions for better analysis and control of climate change issues and the implementation of appropriate initiatives.
12. More than ever, implement, collaboratively with representatives of our CSOs, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which are accessible, relevant and usable by FAO and CSOs, and which results should be presented during the next consultation.

**We call for the FAO and our governments to:**

13. Use/adopt internal policies and regulations to ensure that its resources are not used to the detriment of the wellbeing of its targeted communities, and society as a whole, and use and/or put in place internal mechanisms to support lasting peace and security in the world, and assist those who are displaced by war, armed conflicts, and terrorism, or to displaced-peoples returning to their territories.

**Finally, we commit ourselves to:**

14. Collaborate with our governments to harmonize contradictions in policy frameworks in favour of the interests of the people and of Nature and integrate adaptation and mitigation in approaches to addressing climate change.
15. Be proactive and decisive in getting involved in articulation spaces at the different levels aimed at reducing the influence of corporate power into what should be sovereign democratic processes, and end the impunity of TNCs and governments over human rights abuses and violations.
16. Be vocal against violence of war, armed conflict and terrorism, in whichever form it may take and develop and support concrete solidarity actions to those affected by war, armed-conflict and terrorism, and permanently strive towards last peace and stability in society.
17. Create and facilitate youth spaces for dialogue, exchange, and propagation and replication of successful youth experiences. Simultaneously, we shall strengthen youth their capacities through mentoring, training and exchanges to enhance youth confidence to pursue opportunities offered by agriculture and value-addition and services sectors, as well as accessing public and other funding.
18. Support people-centered initiatives aimed at monitoring the public and private sector actions, and their impacts on society and the environment.

Ladies and gentlemen, we once again recognize the efforts and initiatives of all those involved opening the doors of dialogue and collective policy analysis and action, particularly referring to the planning of the next biennial of FAO's cooperation with our African States.

On behalf of the organizations represented in the 2018 Regional Consultation on the FAO Regional Conference, we trust and hope that our sincere analysis, demands, and proposals are well received by you and your teams, and we look forward to more concrete collaborations with you in the coming period.