

CFS 50: Cross-regional statement on GEWGE workstream

We, the undersigned Members and stakeholders of CFS, reaffirm our sincere commitment to gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment. These are essential elements for achieving food security and nutrition, and Agenda 2030 more broadly. In the midst of a global food crisis driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and conflicts, achieving gender equality is key to sustainably meet the food and nutrition needs of the millions of people facing food insecurity, to eliminate all forms of malnutrition, and to get ourselves back on track to achieve SDGs 2 and 5.

We believe the decision by the plenary in 2019 to establish a workstream on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment was the right decision based on the evidence of gender gaps in agriculture, and we remain committed to the success of this workstream. Worldwide, agriculture and food systems are essential to economically empowering women, can create multiplier effects that promote global benefits and stability, and are a crucial ingredient for ending poverty. Gender equality and the empowerment of all women are more urgent than ever, when the compounding effects of multiple crises are disproportionately impacting millions of women and girls around the world, across all food systems. For women to better withstand these shocks and to continue to play a vital role as agents of change for sustainable development, we need to do more. We need to address the persistent gender gaps and inequalities that women face across issues of land, labor, finance, training, decision-making and other dimensions. Instead of focusing on treating the symptoms of gender discrimination, we should address the structural elements of gender inequality. In this, the CFS Voluntary Guidelines can orient us to deliver on this global challenge.

We are heartened by the agreements we already reached in this process, under the consistent guidance of the Co-chairs of the Open Ended Working Group. We believe this gives us a solid basis from which to move forward. With this in mind, we are convinced of the continued potential for an ambitious but pragmatic outcome, under the revised process proposed by the Chair of the CFS. In moving forward together constructively, we recognize there are a number of considerations for further discussion, including the scope of the existing document, revised working methods and the need to draw extensively from the agreed text, UNGA resolutions, and the Terms of Reference.

Open dialogue offers us the foundation to advance constructively, allowing for the views, opinions and interests of the various members and stakeholders to be presented, to be shared, and to build consensus. With this in mind, further engagement on key sensitive topics is necessary to establish a collaborative framework to move ahead. The Voluntary Guidelines can be considered roadmaps which countries can use to guide their work, should they decide to follow the pathways offered. The voluntary nature of the guidelines allows all of us to aim higher, with a view to reaching a "higher common denominator", while respecting different priorities and contexts. As we strike a balance between ambition and pragmatism, we expect to be supported by agreed language from UNGA and the SDGs, holding fast to the principle of taking no steps backwards.

While the current delays are regrettable, we recognize the complexity and sensitivity of the topic merits longer and deeper discussions. We support the Chair as he charts the way forward to a successful outcome and we remain strongly committed to this process. The CFS owes nothing less to the women and girls, and all people, facing food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition in the world.

Signatories:

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