

Summary by Co-Chairs on Negotiations on the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition

Background

At the 46th Session of its Plenary in 2019, CFS adopted a strategic [Programme of Work for 2020–2023 \(MYPoW\)](#), including the agreement of developing Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's (and Girl's) Empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition. The MYPoW noted that this workstream would support the country-led implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a particular focus on SDG 2 (zero hunger) and SDG 5 (gender equality). Negotiated '[Terms of Reference' \(ToRs\)](#) for the workstream were formally approved by the 47th CFS Plenary on 9 February 2021.

Process

Using a draft document developed by the CFS Secretariat with the input of the Technical Task Team as the basis of consultations, six regional consultations were organized - between September and November 2021 - along with an electronic consultation.

The resulting Zero Draft, circulated in December 2021, was developed based on the outcome of the consultations. The preparation of the Zero Draft would have benefitted from allocating more time for its drafting process after the regional consultations, as it could have contributed to a more concise and streamlined Zero Draft.

An open-ended working group (OEWG) meeting on the First Draft was held in February 2022 and a second OEWG in April 2022. The Draft for negotiations was circulated in mid-March as a basis for negotiations. The negotiation process started in May and continued in June and July 2022. New Co-Chairs' proposals were prepared during the process on the basis of comments received. Accommodating multiple and sometimes quite diverged requests was not easy.

During the process, the Draft became quite comprehensive. It contained 114 paragraphs and about 100 subparagraphs. The majority of paragraphs were agreed *ad referendum*. However, many paragraphs remained still pending. Accord was not reached on gender-related language where views and positions were quite diverged and opposite. Hence, it was not possible to reach a consensus on the last day of the negotiation process in July 2022.

The process itself has been important and the work has been relevant. Many critical issues regarding gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment have been discussed and mutual understanding amongst delegations and stakeholders increased. The lessons learned from the process so far, as well as the current draft, provide a good basis for further negotiations. However, more time is needed for discussion and making the draft more concise and even more concrete. While strong divergences remain on the interpretation of the ToRs and on the scope of the Guidelines on what relates to gender-sensitive issues, there is a wide consensus on issues of extraordinary relevance for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the context of Food Security and Nutrition (accounting for approx. 75% of the current draft).

Conclusions

Co-Chairs appreciate the strong commitment of Delegations to the process. It shows the importance and relevance of the topic. In addition, the support of the members of the Technical Task Team and the CFS Secretariat is indispensable for the whole process.

The Co-chairs recommend the Bureau and the CFS Chairperson that during the CFS 50 plenary, an alternative be presented that would allow Member States to consider the further steps on this critical CFS agreement on the Voluntary Guidelines, building on the agreed language of consensual United Nations General Assembly resolutions as the basis for consensus.