

Proposal for an International Food Security and Nutrition Civil Society Mechanism for relations with the CFS Committee on World Food Security (UN)

“Zero draft” developed by the Governance Working Group of the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty, Oxfam International and Action Aid International

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Civil society will be a formal participant in the new Committee on World Food Security (CFS). The CFS will no longer be limited to a single global session each year. It is foreseen that a series of on-going activities will take place between one session and another, linking national, regional and global levels, in which CSOs will have an important role to play. Even in the annual global meeting, although voting rights will continue to be reserved for member governments, civil society and non-governmental organisations and their networks will be “non-voting participants”.¹ This means that they will have the right to intervene in plenary and breakout discussions, to contribute to the preparation of meeting documents and agendas and to present documents and proposals. The opening up of this space should increase social participation in international policy making, contributing, hopefully, to more effective food security and nutrition strategies. In order to play its part in this new international institutional framework, it is foreseen that civil society will build its own autonomous mechanism for participation in CFS activities, discussion, negotiation and decision-making. The present draft proposal is an initial effort in this direction

BACKGROUND

1. The Declaration of the People’s Food Sovereignty Forum held in November 2009 in parallel to the World Food Security Summit underlined the important opportunity presented by the renewal of the Committee on World Food Security: *“We emphasize the fundamental importance of the renewed CFS as the foremost inclusive international policy body for food and agriculture within the UN system, and as an essential body where the knowledge and perspectives of those whose daily labours have fed humanity for generations are not only heard, but also acted upon.”* It further noted that *“Civil society has played a fundamentally important role in the CFS reform process, opening up a critical space which we intend to fully occupy in a responsible and effective manner. In so doing we will ensure that the voices of the excluded continue to be heard at the heart of food and agricultural policy-making and governance, at all levels.”*
2. The reform of the CFS was crafted through the work of a Contact Group established by the CFS Bureau, in which civil society organizations participated fully. One of the victories scored by the civil society participants, with the support of like-minded governments, was the acknowledgement of the right of civil society organizations to autonomously organize themselves to interface with the CFS. The relevant paragraph of the CFS reform document states that:

“Civil society organizations/NGOs and their networks will be invited to autonomously establish a global mechanism for food security and nutrition which will function as a facilitating body for CSO/NGOs consultation and

¹ Civil society organizations are not the only non-voting participants of the CFS; the full list includes: representatives of UN agencies and bodies, CSO/NGOs, International agricultural research systems, such as the CGIAR, International and regional Financial Institutions including World Bank, International Monetary Fund, regional development banks and World Trade Organization (WTO), and representatives of private sector associations and private philanthropic foundations.

participation in the CFS. Such mechanisms will also serve inter-sessional global, regional and national actions in which organizations of those sectors of the population most affected by food insecurity, would be accorded priority representation. Civil society organizations/NGOs will submit to the CFS Bureau a proposal regarding how they intend to organize their participation in the CFS in a way that ensures broad and balanced participation by regions and types of organizations keeping in mind the principles approved by the CFS at its Thirty-Fourth Session in October 2008 (CFS: 2008/5; CL 135/10: paragraph 15).” (CFS2009/2Rev.2, para 16).

3. The civil society forum of November 2009 gave the civil society participants in the Contact Group a mandate to carry forward civil society interface with the CFS Bureau until the Civil Society Mechanism is operational. This mandate included the preparation of a draft proposal for an autonomous Civil Society Mechanism to relate to the CFS, for wide diffusion among CSOs² concerned with food security and nutrition (see section on Process, paras. 36-39 below).

THE CIVIL SOCIETY MECHANISM (CSM)

Role and functions

4. The essential **role** of the Civil Society Mechanism is to facilitate the participation of CSOs in the work of the CFS, including input to negotiation and decision-making, targeting three aspects of the CFS process in particular.

CFS Plenary Sessions

5. The Civil Society Mechanism will dialogue with the CFS Bureau regarding the allocation of civil society seats in the annual plenary CFS meetings. The relevant paragraph of the CFS reform document states that:

“The Bureau will determine the allocation of seats for Participants and Observers [in the CFS Plenary] in consultation with the CSO/NGO coordination mechanisms. The quota assigned to civil society organizations and NGOs will be such as to ensure their visible and effective participation, equitable geographic representation, with particular attention to the categories of organizations detailed in paragraph 11(ii). (CFS2009/2Rev.2, para 15).

6. The procedure by which the CSM will develop its proposal for the allocation of seats is described in para. 25 below. In addition to dialoguing with the CFS Bureau regarding the allocation of CFS Plenary seats to civil society participants, the Civil Society Mechanism will have the responsibility of facilitating their participation in discussions, negotiation and decision-making through provision of relevant information and any other forms of support that it may be able to provide.

² In this document CSOs refers to people's organisations, social movements, non-government organisations....

Intersessional Activities

7. The new CFS is not limited to an annual meeting. Rather, it includes a series of intersessional activities that take place between one plenary session and another. All participants in the CFS process, including CSOs, are supposed to contribute to intersessional activities of the CFS at various levels, from local to global. The Civil Society Mechanism is expected to facilitate and, where necessary, coordinate this process. The CFS Bureau's Advisory Group (see para. 8 below) is meant to "*provide the vehicle for Participants to contribute regularly in intersessional activities of the Committee*" (see Terms of Reference and Structure of the CFS Advisory Group adopted by the CFS Bureau on 21 January 2010).

Advisory Group to the CFS Bureau

8. The role of the Advisory Group is to bring the views of the non-voting CFS participants, including civil society, to the Bureau of the CFS and "*to provide input to the Bureau regarding the range of tasks which the CFS Plenary has instructed it to perform*" (CFS2009/2Rev.2, para.32). It also has a role in nurturing and maintaining linkages with different actors at regional, sub regional and local levels (CFS2009/2Rev.2, para. 23), including the large number of civil society networks operating at the regional and national levels (CFS2009/Rev.2, paras. 25 and 28). The Civil Society Mechanism is responsible for communicating to the Bureau the names of the persons who will fill the places in the Advisory Group allocated to civil society (currently 4 places). The process for doing so is described in para 28-29 below.
9. The CFS reform document suggests that, in order to fulfill its facilitation role, the Civil Society Mechanism could perform a series of **functions** including the following:
 - i) broad and regular exchange of information, analysis and experience;*
 - ii) developing common positions as appropriate;*
 - iii) communicating to the CFS and, as appropriate, its Bureau through representatives designated by an internal self-selection process within each civil society category;*
 - iv) convening a civil society forum as a preparatory event before CFS sessions if so decided by the civil society mechanism."* (CFS2009/2Rev.2, para. 16)

The Civil Society mechanism can, of course, decide to take on other functions if it sees fit to do so.

Organising Principles

10. The Civil Society Mechanism will be inclusive: it will involve the full range of constituencies concerned about and affected by hunger and food insecurity, including social movements and NGOs, particularly those from developing countries, those affected by hunger and those committed to the eradication of hunger and the realisation of the right to food and food sovereignty.

11. The Civil Society Mechanism will ensure that a wide range of views are heard on how to address the problems of hunger, malnutrition and violations of the right to food. Priority will be given to ensuring that the voices of smallholder producers, fisherfolks, pastoralists, indigenous, urban poor, migrants, agricultural workers etc are heard. Particular priority will be given to peasant and indigenous food producers affected by hunger and marginalization. The CSM will make special efforts to support the capacity of the marginalized to follow and participate in the CFS process.
12. The Civil Society Mechanism will respect pluralism, autonomy and self organisation. It will ensure a balance of gender, regions and constituencies and sectors
13. Participation within the Civil Society Mechanism should aim to preserve unity and solidarity amongst CSOs, but should not imply a flattening of the diversity that exists between civil society in terms of objectives, strategies, and content. However, decision making mechanisms should be agreed by the CSM's Coordination Committee (see para. 19-26) in order to strengthen cooperation amongst all participants and allow common positions when possible.
14. The Civil Society Mechanism will avoid creating a bureaucratic structure in Rome, but will have a permanent secretariat or facilitating mechanism, implementing lobby and advocacy strategies during the intersessional periods as decided by the Coordination Committee (see para 32 below)

Participants

15. All CSOs/NGOs and social movements active in the area of food and nutrition at any level, particularly those that represent food producers, consumers, and other actors directly involved in producing and consuming food who want to participate in CFS processes will be considered eligible to be participants in the Mechanism and to benefit from the information provision, facilitated participation in CFS processes and events and other such services that the Mechanism may be able to provide
16. As stipulated in the CFS reform document, civil society participation in CFS processes will give clear priority to those most affected by hunger based on the following constituencies, with gender and geographic balance.
 - a. *smallholder family farmers,*
 - b. *artisanal fisherfolk,*
 - c. *herders/pastoralists,*
 - d. *landless,*
 - e. *urban poor,*
 - f. *agricultural and food workers,*
 - g. *women,*
 - h. *youth,*
 - i. *consumers,*
 - j. *Indigenous Peoples,*
 - k. *Disaster and war affected people*

- I. *International NGOs*”; (CFS2009/2Rev.2, para. 11 ii)

Governance and structures

The Global Civil Society Mechanism

17. The global Civil Society Mechanism will be the means through which all relevant organizations and networks at all levels are able to interact with the CFS process. Participants in the mechanism will receive regular updates on the activities of the CFS and the Mechanism and will be able to provide information to other civil society participants in the CFS process.

National and regional movements, CSOs/NGOs and their platforms and mechanisms

18. CSOs/NGOs will be encouraged to group together at national and regional levels in order to participate more effectively in policy process concerning food security and nutrition. Already existing regional CSOs/NGOs, their organizations, platforms and networks dealing with food security and nutrition, particularly those which follow the main lines and principles of this document and are already engaged in dialogue with regional or national authorities, will be accepted as participants in the global Civil Society Mechanism. If any CSOs/NGOs take the initiative to organize new regional or national civil society mechanisms these should also follow the main lines and principle of the current document and their application to and participation in the global Civil Society Mechanism will be considered. The identification of such bodies and their adherence to the global Civil Society Mechanism will take place progressively. It is hoped that regional CSO/NGOs consultations in conjunction with upcoming Regional FAO Conferences will be able to play a role in this regard.³

Coordination Committee

19. A Coordination Committee for the Civil Society Mechanism will be established, composed of constituency and sub-regional focal points as follows: 4 focal points from smallholder family farmer organizations and 2 from each of the other constituencies mentioned above, and 1 focal point from each sub-region (suggested breakdown: North America, Central America and Caribbean, Andean Region, Southern Cone, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Arab speaking countries, South Asia, South East Asia, Central Asia, Oceania and Pacific, Southern Africa, West Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, North Africa).
20. Each focal point will hold the function for a period of 2 years.
21. Gender and geographic balance among the focal points in the CSM Coordination Committee has to be ensured. International movements, CSOs NGOs and their platforms or networks participating in the CFS should aim for 50% women participation.

³ The establishment and linking up of regional and national processes will be discussed in greater detail throughout the process of finalizing this draft.

This can be achieved by asking each constituency to nominate one man and one woman from two different regions to occupy their 2 slots in the Coordination Committee. Over time each constituency has to demonstrate that they have chosen focal points from all the regions.

22. The Coordination Committee is responsible for ensuring that the functions of the Civil Society Mechanism are carried out as effectively as possible.
23. The Coordination Committee will meet face to face at least once a year and virtually once every quarter
24. The Coordination Committee will make decisions on the functioning of the Mechanism such as criteria for participation in the Mechanism, quotas for participation in the CFS Plenary, selection of civil society members of the Advisory Group, agenda of annual civil society forums. Decisions will be made in consultation with participants in the Mechanism as much as possible. Decisions will be made by consensus wherever possible. If consensus is not possible, then decisions will be made by voting at a required majority⁴. In any case all disagreeing positions have to be noted and reported.
25. When the CSM provides advice to the CFS through its Coordination Committee, it will seek to communicate the range of divergent positions that are held by participants in the Mechanism.
26. The Coordination Committee will be responsible for dialoguing with the CFS Bureau regarding the allocation of civil society seats in the annual CFS plenary sessions. Seats allocated to CSOs in CFS meeting will be distributed among the constituencies by the Coordination Committee in a balanced way following the criteria suggested for the Coordination Committee itself (see para.19 above) and their possible contribution to the discussion of the items on the agenda of the CFS meeting. Information about upcoming CFS meetings will be put on the Civil Society Mechanism website and sent to the email list. Organizations wishing to attend the CFS meeting will be requested to fill in an online form which asks them to detail their organization, areas of work and organizational affiliations, which agenda item they are most interested in, and what they think they can contribute to the discussion. All the forms will be sent to the Coordination Committee which will decide seat allocation taking into account the concrete technical or political contribution. Regional and gender balance and the relevance of the CFS agenda to each constituency and region will influence the acceptance of specific applications.

Advisory Group to the CFS Bureau – CSO members

27. The role of the civil society members of the Advisory Group will not be one of representation but rather of facilitating two-way communication between the Bureau and the Civil Society Mechanism. The essential tasks of the civil society AG members will be to share information and to present the range of views of the Mechanism and any common positions that CSOs may have developed. They will share the agendas of

⁴ the exact nature of the majority will be decided by the CC once it is constituted

upcoming Advisory Group and Bureau meetings with all members of the Mechanism via the website and other means of communication and solicit comments which they will share with the Advisory Group. Other aspects of their role may be clarified progressively as the functioning of the Advisory Group itself is clarified. It is essential that, as much as possible, all regions, constituencies, organizations, networks and sectors have the opportunity to follow and feed into the work of the Advisory Group through the Coordinating Committee. The civil society AG members will coordinate among themselves and through the Coordinating Committee to ensure as a collective the maximum possible participation. The AG will respect the organizing principles of the CS Mechanism. In line with the organizational principles of the Civil Society Mechanism it will be essential to ensure that organizations and networks from affected constituencies in developing countries are given priority in being able to participate in and inform the work of the AG.

28. The CS members of the Advisory Group, currently four, will be chosen by the members of the Coordination Committee respecting the priority given to small food producer constituencies. They will constitute a collective of four people who have the trust of the Coordination Committee.
29. The civil society members of the AG should be selected by the Coordinating Committee according to their ability to perform the role expected of them. Key selection criteria might include:
 - Ability to participate regularly in AG meetings in person or via telecon and video conferencing facilities
 - Demonstrable commitment to the organizing principles of the Mechanism, especially inclusiveness and prioritizing input from those most affected
 - Ability to network with a broad range of constituencies, organizations, networks and sectors
 - Communication and networking skills

Annual civil society meeting

30. The Coordination Committee will facilitate the organization of a civil society meeting every year if possible and strategic, just prior to the annual CFS session. The meeting will be open to all interested civil society participants that have registered for the CSO Mechanism. For decision making a balance among constituencies and regions is important. Appropriate mechanisms, including possibilities to vote when consensus is lacking, will be set up. These will be similar to those used in the parallel civil society fora organized so far. The meeting will provide an important occasion for exchanging information, discussing priority food security issues, identifying priorities for civil society advocacy and, eventually, deliberating common positions to be taken to the annual CFS Plenary. Any statements that result from these interactions will not be made available on the website of the CS Mechanism unless they are adopted by consensus. In the case that there is no consensus, the organizations that support the statement can make those statements available on their own websites.

Operations and resource requirements

31. The Coordination Committee will establish, with the support of the secretariat, an email list and website. Any interested CSO will be able to sign up to receive the emails by registering their email address on the website. It will also facilitate the organization of the annual civil society meeting.
32. The Coordination Committee will need to be able to count on a light secretariat in order to perform its functions. The IPC secretariat, already established in Rome and servicing small food producer constituencies in particular, offers its services at the outset provided that the necessary resources are made available.
33. The resources necessary to ensure effective civil society participation in the CFS process should be addressed in calculating the budgetary requirements of the CFS, as indicated in the CFS reform document (CFS2009/2Rev.2, para.50). These requirements include travel costs for CSO participants from developing countries, website development and updating, secretariat staff, translation and office expenses.⁵

ACCOUNTABILITY AND EVALUATION

34. Elements of accountability:
 - The Coordination Committee will be accountable to CSOs worldwide working on food security and nutrition on the one hand, and the CFS on the other.
 - The CC will maintain an updated website and email list and issue an annual report detailing its activities over the previous year. These tools will be the main mechanisms for accountability.
 - While each focal point will naturally be responsible first and foremost to their own constituency, the CC will collectively be responsible for all its actions to all CSOs.
 - Participants in the Mechanism will be able to feedback on the quality of their participation, the performance of the Coordination Committee and Advisory Group Focal Points and make suggestions as to how to improve the functioning of the Mechanism.
 - The mechanisms for accountability of any regional or national Civil Society Mechanisms that may be established will be clarified once initiatives in that direction have been taken, but will follow the principles that underlie the current document.
 - The mechanisms of accountability, detailed below, will be reviewed after 3 years and any necessary changes will be made by the Coordination Committee.
35. The CSO Mechanism's email list and website (available, at least, in English, French and Spanish, subject to availability of funding) will be the main tools for outreach. The website will contain the following information which will also be diffused through the email list:
 - a) The current document;

⁵ A budget for the first two years will be developed in the course of finalizing this document and presented to the CFS Bureau along with the proposal for the Civil Society Mechanism.

- b) Link to the CFS website;
 - c) Process and timeline for selecting the CC focal points for the upcoming 2-year term and an email address to contact for further information;
 - d) List of current and previous CC focal points;
 - e) Dates and agendas of upcoming CFS meetings; number of seats allocated to CSOs in CFS meetings and an online form to request participation in the meeting;
 - f) Dates and agendas of upcoming Advisory Group and Bureau meetings; an online form to submit comments regarding points on the agenda of the Advisory Group;
 - g) Date of the annual meeting of CSOs that will take place each year before the CFS;
 - h) Annual Report of the CC (see below);
 - i) Any joint statements that are approved by consensus (of the CC or participants in the annual meeting as the case may be).
- The Annual Report of the CC will include the following information:
 - a) Outreach: Summary of the steps taken to share information about CFS processes to CSOs worldwide (number of “hits” on the website, number of CSOs receiving the email list, details of efforts made to diffuse information about the email list and website);
 - b) Selection of focal points to the CSO mechanism: Each constituency will document the process for selecting their focal points, including the specific names of the organizations involved in the selection process, as well as efforts that were made to ensure regional and gender balance;
 - c) Allocation of CFS Plenary seats to civil society participants: List of all organizations requesting to participate in each CFS meeting, the final list of participants (indicating regional and gender balance), and a summary of the criteria for selection;
 - d) Advisory Group: Summary of criteria and process for choosing CSO appointees to the Advisory Group and details of efforts to ensure regional, constituency and gender balance together with the insurance that the most active organization in the CFS process are present;
 - e) Facilitation of participation of CSOs in intersessional activities: The number and summary of all comments on the agenda items of the Advisory Group; summary of contributions and outcomes of the Advisory Group process⁶.

PROCESS

36. The current “draft zero” was developed by the IPC (including Via Campesina), Oxfam International and Action Aid International, as active CSO members of the Contact Group. These organizations will make every effort to share this draft with other CSOs and to incorporate major concerns. It is understood that it is to the advantage of CSOs to present one single, unified proposal.

⁶ The Peoples’ Food Sovereignty Forum of November 2009 indicated that “CSOs will evaluate both the performance of the CFS and their own performance in three years.”

37. Once this proposal is finalized as a “*zero draft*” by IPC, Oxfam and Action Aid it will be distributed by email to all Contact Group members, all participants in the Peoples’ Forum for Food Sovereignty, all CSOs which have attended the CFS and the World Summit on Food Security, and the networks and members of each of these organizations, as well as being posted on relevant websites.
38. In addition, the draft will be discussed at relevant CSO meetings over the coming months, such as the IFAD Farmers’ Forum, the annual IPC meeting, an open meeting for interested organizations directly after the IPC meeting, and particularly the FAO regional consultations. This draft will be also communicated to the CFS bureau.
39. The final draft will be ratified during the CSO meeting before the CFS meeting in October 2010. The ratified proposal will be submitted, with the signatures of the supporting organizations, to the CFS bureau by the time of the 2010 CFS plenary session and after the civil society meeting preceding the CFS.

	Completion date	Participants
Draft Zero		IPC, AA and Oxfam
Comments on draft Zero		CSO / NGO contact group members, participants in the Civil Society Forum and other interested organisations, networks etc
Draft 1	10 th April	Drafting committee: IPC, AA and Oxfam
Comments on draft 1	mid May	Comments from widest possible range of relevant organisations, networks and constituencies including feedback at relevant CSO meetings over the coming months, such as the IFAD Farmers' Forum, the annual IPC meeting, an open meeting for interested organizations directly after the IPC meeting, and the FAO regional consultations
Final draft	Mid June	Drafting committee: IPC, AA and Oxfam
Endorsement & registration	Mid July onwards	All organisations and networks will be invited to endorse the proposal and to register as participants in the Mechanism
Constituencies and regions requested to nominate their focal points as members of the CC	To complete	All registered organisations, networks
Selection of Coordination Committee focal points	Annual Civil Society Consultation previous to CFS annual meeting	To complete
Selection of Advisory Group members	Annual Civil Society Consultation previous to CFS annual meeting	To complete
Annual Civil Society Consultation previous to CFS annual meeting		To complete
CFS Plenary		To complete

Annex 1: Key principles coming out of Working Group 1 of the Peoples' Food Sovereignty Forum 2009 regarding civil society participation within the CFS

- CSO participation in the CFS has to privilege the most affected, including smallholder producers, fisherfolks, pastoralists, indigenous, urban poor, migrants, agricultural workers etc.
- The renewed CFS needs an overarching gender perspective, especially given the shift in focus towards smallholder producers, of which women are the primary agents. CSO groups participating within the CFS should aim for 50% women participation.
- Participation within the civil society coordinating mechanism should aim to preserve the unity and solidarity created amongst CSOs in this process, but should not imply a flattening of the diversity that exists between civil society in terms of objectives, strategies, and content. Strategies of association have to reflect this.
- New funding mechanisms being established in response to the food crisis should be linked to the CFS.
- A renewed CFS has to have strong links to the local, national and regional, in order to contribute to assisting the struggles of actors to open up spaces of governance and policy-making at those levels, and to ensure that the perspectives and knowledge of locally-based actors is heard and acted upon.
- The CFS has to be a space in which CSOs can advance their own content and produce social change.
- The CSO contact group should continue in its work unchanged and start working out the details of CSO participation in the CFS.
- Those with the capacity – NGOs etc – must continue to help those lacking in capacity – the illiterate, marginalised – to follow the CFS process with helpful information distribution.
- National platforms have to mobilise as broad a section of society as possible.
- The CSO autonomous mechanism has to avoid creating a bureaucratic structure in Rome.
- Intersectoral representation within the CSO mechanism is very important – need a wide range of views.
- It is necessary to give more value to peasant and indigenous production mechanisms under threat.
- CSOs will evaluate both the performance of the CFS and their own performance in three years.