

TO: ALL CSO'S INVOLVED IN FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY, RIGHT TO FOOD AND FOOD SOVERIEGNTY

SUBJECT: DRAFT 1 OF THE PROPOSAL FOR THE INTERNATIONAL FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION CIVIL SOCIETY MECHANISM FOR RELATIONS WITH THE CFS COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY (UN)

Dear colleagues,

You will find attached Draft 1 of the Proposal for the International Food Security and Nutrition Civil Society Mechanism for relations with the Committee on World Food Security (CSM), which incorporates the many comments received on the Zero Draft.

Given the broad range of stakeholders involved and the innovative nature of this endeavour, the Civil Society Mechanism will clearly require time and experimentation to work through a range of issues. Nevertheless, it is essential to have the CSM functioning during the annual meeting of the CFS in October 2010 in order to ensure that civil society participates effectively in the decision-making at the October plenary session and in the heavy and significant workload that the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group will be tackling from mid October on. We therefore propose that the CSM and its Coordination Committee (CC) be established quickly but for a provisional one-year period. During this "experimental" period participants will come to understand better the functioning of the CSM and, following an evaluation after one year, there will be the possibility of revising the CSM and selecting a new CC (for a 2 year period in line with the procedures of the CFS itself). Nevertheless, even during the first year every effort will be made to ensure that processes to select members of the Coordination Committee, members of the CFS Advisory Group, participants in the CFS Plenary Sessions and to generally facilitate the participation of the broadest range of civil society actors in the work of the CFS, are as inclusive and as transparent as possible.

This letter contains two sections: one on the process of developing and finalising the draft and secondly, a list of questions which we hope will highlight some of the key unresolved issues that the Drafting Committee faces.

Process

1. The civil society forum that was held in parallel to the World Food Summit in November 2009 (People's Food Sovereignty Forum) gave the CSO participants in the CFS Contact Group the 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 proposal for an autonomous Civil Society Mechanism.
2. Three of the CSO members of the Contact Group (the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) (including Via Campesina), Oxfam and Action Aid International) took the initiative to establish a Drafting Committee to develop the CSO Mechanism.
3. The Drafting Committee prepared a "Zero Draft" of the CSM and distributed it widely in March 2010 by email and websites. In addition, it was discussed at a number of meetings, such as the IFAD Farmers' Forum (February 2010), the annual IPC meeting as well as an open meeting for interested organizations directly after the IPC meeting (March 2010), a consultation to update the CFA of the HLTF (May 2010), and civil society consultations held in parallel to FAO regional conferences.

4. A number of comments were received by email, as well as inputs from the meetings mentioned above. The comments were discussed by the Drafting Committee and incorporated into Draft 1 (attached) in the case of consensus amongst the Committee¹. Suggestions on which there was no consensus were either rejected by all, or else formed the basis of the questions included in the present letter, on which we are requesting more discussion and comments for Draft 2. A table summarising the comments received is attached.
5. The drafting committee will prepare Draft 2 using inputs from this second round of comments. The deadline for receiving comments on Draft 1 is August 31, 2010 and Draft 2 (the final document) will be ready by mid-September. It will stipulate that the CSM will be evaluated and revised after one year.
6. The final CSM document will be distributed widely with a request for endorsement by CSOs between mid September to early October. It will also be presented for endorsement by the CSOs who are present at the CSO Forum preceding the 36th Session of the CFS in October 2010.

Key issues

We have highlighted, below some of the key issues which seem to require more reflection on which we invite your further comments in order to finalise the current draft:

1. A large number of comments have been received suggesting new constituencies, in addition to those mentioned in the Zero Draft. While the drafting committee agrees that the existing list is not necessarily exhaustive and that there are many regional specificities, we feel that we should launch the first Coordination Committee with the constituencies as they are recognized in the CFS Reform document. As mentioned above, the one-year evaluation of the CSM will provide an opportunity to adjust the composition of the Coordination Committee as necessary. During this year we will gain valuable insights that will help us make these adjustments. In the experience of mechanisms that include a wide variety of regions and sectors, such as the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty, it is possible to include additional constituencies as they become aware of the CFS and show an interest in participating in it. In adding new constituencies in the future, we think that we should take into account the fact that the CSO Mechanism should be open to all CSO actors involved with food security and nutrition, but at the same time the number of CC members needs to be kept at a “workable” level.
2. It is clear that a lot more thinking needs to go into the roles of the national and regional CSMs and the principles of how national and regional CSO mechanisms could function and interact with the global CSM. However we find that it is too early to give specific details before mechanisms are actually established at these levels and their needs become clearer. Nevertheless, we would welcome any comments or lessons learned from other similar experiences.
3. It was suggested that there be a deadline for ensuring at least 50% women’s participation at all levels. Would this be useful? Do you agree?
4. The current draft states that the Coordination Committee will decide which types of decisions can be taken by consensus and which by voting. Do you agree with this in

¹ Due to significant changes and restructuring of the text we chose not to present the new draft in “track changes” mode.

principle? What principles could help guide the Coordination Committee in its decision-making?

5. Do you agree with the process for selection of the CC members as currently stated in the text:

“Each constituency and sub-region will decide through internal negotiation what process they will establish for CC member selection, while adhering to regional and gender balance as outlined above and to the principle of transparency. It is suggested that each constituency/sub-region might establish a council of focal points representing the major organisations/networks in that constituency/sub-region and that members of this council might sit on the CC in rotation for a period of 2 years each. The process of CC member selection and outcomes will be documented and made available to all CSOs and others.”

6. Coordination Committee members have a large task of facilitation (especially those who are also members of the Advisory Group) and they need to be able to dedicate their time to this role. This means that their organisations must be able to free up their time and provide some support. Is this feasible? Have constituencies and social organisations given enough priority to CFS processes to make this possible? Do all constituencies have the necessary capacity to play this role? If not, what sort of support is needed?

While sincerely thanking all those who took the time to submit comments, the drafting committee recognises that almost all comments came from NGOs. We hope that the CSO community can find ways to reach out to and engage other constituencies in the process of finalising the current draft.

We invite all comments to the current draft to be sent to the following email address cs04cfs@gmail.com by August 31, 2010 and thank you for your commitment to this process.

In Solidarity,

Action Aid International
International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
Oxfam