

Mr Jean-Pierre Halkin
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CC: Ms Chantal Symoens, Head of Unit a.i. Unit C1 - Rural Development, Food Security & Nutrition

Dear Mr Jean-Pierre Halkin,

On the eve of the 37th Session of the Committee on World Food Security I wrote to you in my capacity as Western European member of the Coordination Committee of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM) autonomously established to interface with the Committee on World Food Security (CFS). This letter is attached for your reference. Now, in follow-up to the 37th Session, I would like to share with you our major concerns and expectations regarding the issues on the CFS agenda for the coming months. We hope that this exchange can help to build a structured dialogue between European civil society and the European authorities in the multi-actor spirit of the CFS. The positions put forward in this letter draw on assessments carried out within the CSM as a whole, which were tailored to the European situation in a meeting of the Western Europe CSM held on 30 November 2011.

As the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform dealing with food security and nutrition, the CFS at its 37th Session has showed its capacity to put critical issues on its agenda in a timely manner, with the support of the High Level Panel of Experts. However, the mixed outcomes of the latest session underline the need to further invest in the Committee, to ensure that CFS members develop coherent and coordinated policies to eradicate hunger and support locally rooted and sustainable food systems by making them more resilient and better framed to address the needs of those affected by the food crisis and other shocks. This perspective has not guided all the discussions and decisions of the 37th Session, where too often national or specific interests, like those of the G20, dominated resulting in lost opportunities to address policy issues for food and nutrition security in a coherent and timely fashion. CSOs are committed to ensuring that the voice of those affected by food insecurity will resonate at the CFS, and call the wealthiest countries in the world to move beyond business as usual to secure the right to food for the most vulnerable people.

In the following paragraphs we set out our views on specific issues and the points on which we hope it will be possible to count on the support of the EU and the European member states of the CFS.

[Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure to Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of Food Security](#)

Civil society participants in the October negotiations generally appreciated the positive positions put forward by the EU. We hope that during the final round of negotiations in early 2012 the EU will:

- Maintain unchanged the global position adopted for the October negotiation;
- Maintain a strong opposition to reopening text that has already been agreed in plenary;
- Ensure a progressive final wording for all paragraphs of the Guidelines that still need to be agreed in plenary, in particular section 12 (investments – including strong language against large-scale land acquisitions and in favour of the applying the principles of Free Prior and Informed Consent), part 7 (implementation, monitoring and evaluation, including adding a paragraph on policy coherence as proposed by CSOs), section 23 (climate change) and the Glossary.
- Urge EU member state delegations to contribute to funding the final round of negotiations and, in particular, the participation of CSOs.
- Support the immediate adoption of the Voluntary Guidelines as soon as the text has been agreed, without waiting until the 38th Session of the CFS.

Under the Danish Presidency we expect to enjoy the same excellent spirit of collaboration as in the past, including sharing of relevant wording proposals where possible. We would appreciate a meeting with the EU delegation at the beginning of the final negotiation session.

How to increase food security and smallholder-sensitive investment in agriculture

Civil society's assessment of the outcome of this Round Table was essentially positive. The decision box as adopted recognizes the primacy of small-scale sustainable food production and the fact that small-scale producers are the major investors in agriculture. The a-critical language concerning partnerships and corporate investment that featured in the draft decision box was eliminated. However, we expect continued efforts on the part of some CFS members and participants to privilege corporate investment, underplay the importance of public policies and promote approaches to the "modernization" of agriculture that further weaken the bases of sustainable family-based farming. We hope to achieve synergetic positions with the EU regarding implementation of the decision box building on the "EU policy framework to assist developing countries in addressing food security challenges" and its sensitive discussion of the kinds of measures required to support smallholder food production. We highlight in particular the need for:

- Rapid action to launch the consultation on principles for responsible investment in agriculture "promptly after approval of the VGs"; framing the Terms of Reference in such a way as to promote participation by organizations of small-scale food producers and to avoid any confusion with the RAI Principles;
- Ensuring that the HLPE report assessing strategies for linking smallholders to value chains and the impact of public-private partnerships reaches the CFS along with the outcome of the consultation;
- Encouraging multi-actor country reporting on actions taken to align international and domestic private and public investment in agriculture with food and nutrition security concerns.

Food Price Volatility

In the view of civil society the debates on this issue were largely dominated by some key G20 countries that were unwilling to tackle the root causes of food price volatility. Non G20 developing countries were almost totally absent from the debate. Because the debate was hijacked by the G20 action plan on agriculture and because of the flawed process where some CSO inputs on crucial issues had not been taken into account, CSOs walked out of the room during the last night of the negotiations. Although the intervention of the CSO representative in the Panel and the presentation of the HLPE report provided strong evidence about the issues to address, the time was apparently not ripe to start debating the needed revision of trade rules, biofuel policies or the need to address unsustainable consumption. Prices will remain high and volatile in the medium term, however, and FPV will figure on the CFS agenda in 2012 in connection with issues like biofuels, reserves, AMIS&RRF, social protection, and climate change. In preparation for these discussions civil society would like to have opportunities to exchange with the European member states and the EU, in particular regarding biofuels and food reserves.

Gender, Food Security and Nutrition

Civil society feels that the language of the background document and the final recommendations was significantly improved during the debate. However, having a policy roundtable completely focused on gender and nutrition, sometimes limited the discussion to that space instead of addressing them as cross-cutting issues going through all the policy roundtables. Civil society recognizes the commitment of the EU to gender equality and recognition of the key role of women in ensuring food and nutrition security. Points on which dialogue with the European member states and the EU would be particularly appreciated in follow-up to the 37th session include:

- discussion of the meaning and different uses of the terms 'Food Security', 'Food Security and Nutrition', 'Food and Nutrition Security', and 'Nutrition Security' in order to help reach a common understanding and awareness of the distinctions between the terms and to clarify the role, linkages and added value of the CFS to other initiatives such as the SUN.
- reflection on how to follow-up on the gender-related recommendations, especially with regard to looking into ways of supporting national initiatives to monitor compliance with decisions made on gender at the last CFS;
- possible preparation by civil society of a concept note for the Bureau on what civil society means by mainstreaming gender in the CFS areas of work and how to achieve it.

Global Strategic Framework

Civil society is strongly committed to the GSF which we consider to play a central role in the reformed CFS. We were disappointed at the luke-warm support for the GSF expressed by most delegations during the 37th Session. Given this situation, however, we welcome the fact that the proposed decision box was adopted without changes. We would appreciate opportunities to dialogue with the European member states and the EU regarding CSM positions concerning the role of the GSF and the process and calendar by which it should be developed, adopted, applied and updated. Points for discussion include the need to: guarantee a qualified and

balanced participation of civil society/social movements through the CSM with full representation of those most affected by food and nutrition insecurity; ensure that the elaboration of Draft 1 and 2 be undertaken by the Task team with the participation of CSM members; negotiate the GSF text in an OEWG next July and submit the first version to the 38th Session of the CFS, in October 2012. To CSOs the GSF should be a flexible living document which incorporates major decisions and discussions taking place in the CFS. It should have a strong coherent analysis of the root causes of hunger and malnutrition and serve to harmonize the various attempts to address the issue, in this way strengthening the reformed CFS.

Considering the value of the GSF as an instrument of policy coherence, we would like to explore with you the scope for the CFS to learn from the EU's experience with PCD.

In general, we feel that the European authorities and European civil society have a shared interest in defending the independence and the authoritative input of the HLPE into CFS deliberations; ensuring that all policy discussions and decisions within the CFS maintain an unwavering focus on food security and nutrition objectives; and developing the practice within the CFS of not being afraid to highlight and discuss contested issues even if consensus cannot be achieved.

We hope that the FAO Regional Conference for Europe in Azerbaijan in April will provide an opportunity for exchange on the points exposed in this letter. We urge the European states and the EU to incorporate in the programme of the Conference a multi-actor session on the CFS and the GSF. We also hope that a practice of regular encounters between the European authorities and the European CSM can be established. Finally, we would like to suggest that the EU consider experimenting with joint government/civil society reporting to the coming session of the CFS on the implementation of the recommendations adopted at the 37th Session.

Yours sincerely,

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