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COMMITTEE ON FISHERIES

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UPDATE ON PROGRESS TO DEVELOP THE GLOBAL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK IN SUPPORT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES FOR SECURING SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND POVERTY ERADICATION (SSF-GSF)

I. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1. At its 32nd Session in 2016, the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) welcomed the development of an FAO SSF Umbrella Assistance Programme, and agreed on the need for a complementary mechanism in the form of an SSF Guidelines Global Strategic Framework (SSF-GSF), to be developed with the full and effective participation of all regions and in consultation with small-scale fisheries stakeholders.
2. The Committee invited FAO to further elaborate the purpose, role and structure of the SSF-GSF, stressing its function in relation to information and experience sharing, and in promoting an inclusive and holistic approach. The Committee also suggested exploring the role of the SSF-GSF in relation to monitoring the progress of achieving the relevant SDG targets, while recognizing that the responsibility of SDG reporting lies with the countries.
3. This session background document provides an update to COFI on SSF-GSF developments since 2016, including an overview of the purpose and current structure of the SSF-GSF, the outcomes of meetings that have been held and proposed next steps.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE SSF-GSF

4. The SSF-GSF is an informal global mechanism for facilitating interaction between COFI Members and interested actors, to support the implementation of the SSF Guidelines at all levels that allows, for participation of small-scale fisheries actors in guiding the implementation. Hence, the overall purpose of the SSF-GSF is to ensure coherent participatory planning, implementation and

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monitoring of policies, strategies and actions in support of the SSF Guidelines, and in accordance with Human Rights laws.

5. The SSF-GSF is a multi-stakeholder framework with no formal constitutional/legal standing. The SSF-GSF does not have any decision-making authority, its role is advisory and facilitative. The main principles guiding the activities and functioning of the SSF-GSF are those stated in Chapter 3 of the SSF Guidelines (Guiding principles), to ensure a coherent implementation of any policies, strategies and actions in support of the SSF Guidelines implementation.

III. DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE 32ND SESSION OF COFI

6. In accordance with the recommendations of the 32nd Session of COFI, the SSF-GSF has been further elaborated through discussions between in particular the FAO Secretariat and the IPC Fisheries Working Group¹ but also involving FAO members. The FAO Secretariat presented a zero draft of the proposed SSF-GSF structure and purpose to the COFI Bureau at its meeting on 20 April 2017, and the COFI Bureau was invited to share the zero draft with its members for feedback and guidance for further development.

7. On 14-15 May 2018, a first AG meeting took place in Rome with the participation of the IPC Secretariat and IPC Fisheries Working Group members (World Forum of Fisher People – WFFP, the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers – WFF, La Via Campesina – LVC, IFAD, the OHCHR and FAO). On 16 May, a joint meeting of the AG and the Friends of the SSF Guidelines was held, which included the participation of Indonesia, Norway and Peru (Tanzania, the fourth Friends member, could unfortunately not participate). The scope of the meetings was to move forward in defining the SSF-GSF structure and way of functioning, including developing draft ToRs to guide the work of the different bodies within the SSF-GSF.

8. The proposed structure of the SSF-GSF is composed of an Advisory Group composed of small-scale fisheries representatives; a group of governments that support the SSF Guidelines implementation called Friends of SSF Guidelines; a Knowledge Sharing Platform (KSP) with other organisations and partners supporting SSF Guidelines implementation; and an FAO Secretariat. The following description of this structure includes key elements of the draft ToRs as discussed at these meetings.

IV. PROPOSED SSF-GSF STRUCTURE

- *The Advisory Group (AG)*

The AG is composed of representatives from global small-scale fisheries organizations and other relevant constituencies. AG members are identified through a consultative process and in a participatory manner, including also, for example, Indigenous Peoples working in the small-scale fisheries sector and rural workers as well as key UN organisations, and the membership should have gender and regional balance. Current AG members include the IPC Fisheries Working Group member organisations (World Forum of Fisher People – WFFP, the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers – WFF, La Via Campesina – LVC), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

¹ FAO has a partnership agreement with the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) Fisheries Working Group representing member fisheries organizations.

The AG promotes greater policy coherence in the implementation of the SSF Guidelines based on best practices and lessons learned, from local experiences and inputs received from the national and regional levels. The AG shall advise the Friends of the SSF Guidelines on SSF Guidelines implementation and monitoring processes, and interact with FAO to inform FAO's implementation work, and to generally facilitate CSO participation in SSF Guidelines implementation.

- ***Friends of the SSF Guidelines (the Friends)***

The Friends are COFI Members participating on a voluntary basis. One Member shall be identified by the group to represent the Friends and maintain relations with the AG and the Knowledge Sharing Platform. The current members, participating in the initial discussions on the SSF-GSF without any formal commitment, are Indonesia, Norway, Peru and Tanzania but membership can be expanded and/or changed through rotation ensuring a regional balance.

The Friends will liaise with other COFI members and raise awareness of the SSF Guidelines and promote a human rights-based approach. They will support the monitoring of the SSF Guidelines implementation through participatory processes, and assist in mobilizing resources in support of all aspects of SSF Guidelines implementation.

- ***Knowledge Sharing Platform (KSP)***

Other actors (than those mentioned in the context of AG and Friends) supporting SSF Guidelines implementation membership, e.g. academia, research institutes, regional organizations, and NGOs can be invited to join the KSP. The KSP will consist of actors who are engaged in SSF Guidelines implementation and who work actively with small-scale fisheries issues, in particular with regard to knowledge generation and capacity development.

KSP members will support the AG and the Friends with research, communication, capacity development, resource mobilization and other relevant activities. They will assist in raising awareness on best practices, related to the implementation of the SSF Guidelines and the promoting of a human rights-based approach. KSP members can also seek advice from the AG on strategies and activities needed to further the SSF Guidelines implementation.

- ***FAO SSF Secretariat***

The FAO will support the SSF-GSF by a Secretarial function and assist in coordinating activities under the SSF-GSF and assist the AG and the Friends as required.

V. ADDITIONAL KEY MESSAGES FROM MAY 2018 MEETINGS

9. The May 2018 meetings discussed the overall role of the SSF-GSF and stressed the importance that the SSF Guidelines, be implemented through a bottom-up approach supporting governments to take informed decisions. The SSF-GSF should facilitate experience sharing and help collect information from and link SSF Guidelines implementation with other existing processes, e.g., IFAD Farmers Forum, FAO regional consultations, the VGGT implementation process, etc. It was noted that in particular the Friends could play a pivotal in breaking silos in the UN and in other relevant regional and global arenas, promoting the use of the SSF Guidelines in other relevant processes in relation to poverty reduction, SDGs etc.

10. Members of the Friends are well placed to create synergies, mainstream small-scale fisheries projects and programs, assist in mobilizing additional resources and share experiences, including through the use of social media. It was noted though that the Friends is not a formal entity but a flexible group able to promote, the visibility and inclusion of the SSF Guidelines and their principles in relevant discussions and actions.

11. The SSF Guidelines are based on international human rights standards and their implementation, should be through the application of a human rights-based approach (HRBA). The OHCHR is a member of the AG and it was suggested to invite national human rights commissions as well as journalists, interested in relevant topics to become members of the KSP to strengthen the SSF-GSF in this respect. It was also noted that KSP members could be important for research and bringing innovative approaches to SSF Guidelines implementation and monitoring. Still, it is important to ensure that there are links to 'the ground', i.e., that the needs and real experience from communities are taken into consideration.

VI. NEXT STEPS

12. While the recent meetings allowed for advancing the development of the roles and tasks of the SSF-GSF and its different functions, the relevant ToRs still need to be finalized and further discussions on the practical operationalization of the SSF-GSF are required. It has also been suggested that the SSF-GSF mechanism should be given a different name that better reflects its role and purpose.

13. FAO Members are encouraged to reflect on the information on the SSF-GSF provided in this paper and convey their comments.