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COUNCIL

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FAO Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society

Executive Summary

1. This document is submitted to the 145th Session of the Council for approval, following the comments and views of the Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees of 7 November 2012, which reviewed the draft Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society (doc. JM 2012.3/3.Rev.1). The Joint Meeting welcomed the draft strategy, and requested the Secretariat to undertake a number of refinements. This document presents to the Council the Strategy for Partnerships with Civil Society, updated in line with the refinements requested by the Joint Meeting.
2. Overall, this Strategy, conceived as a living document and therefore subject to improvements *inter alia* based on the findings from the evaluations of partnerships, provides an umbrella framework to guide the work of FAO and Civil Society in their pursuit of the eradication of hunger.
3. This Strategy is the result of extensive consultation with FAO staff, civil society, and Member States. This document incorporates their comments and feedback received, and provides relevant clarification on several issues of concern.
4. The document builds upon the foundations established by other FAO main corporate work carried out in recent years (IEE, IPA, Organization wide strategy, Strategic Framework), will provide, together with other complementary tools, a direction for the joint work of FAO and civil society.
5. Given the emphasis that the Member States and FAO have given to accelerating the decentralization process, the strategy has been conceived as a useful tool for FAO staff working at decentralized level, where FAO offices will play a catalytic role in its implementation.
6. The strategy encourages a bottom-up approach, and once endorsed, foresees a period of work in which five regions, with support from FAO headquarters, will prepare an Action Plan for working with civil society.
7. The strategy will be accompanied by a set of practical tools and procedures that will put into practice the concepts and direction outlined in this document, mainly: a handbook with criteria for selecting and working with different civil society organizations; guidelines on how to ensure balanced representation from civil society based on geographic coverage, constituency and type of organizations; indicators for the monitoring and evaluation system; and a set of risk assessment measures.

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8. Two of FAO's major comparative advantages in working with different stakeholders are: (i) a neutral and impartial forum for discussions; and (ii) a knowledge Organization capable of obtaining practical results in improving the lives of the poor and food insecure.

9. These comparative advantages have been identified as two pillars on which to base this strategy. Therefore, while the strategy foresees six areas of engagement, it can be said that FAO will collaborate with civil society to ensure two main outcomes:

- processes of inclusive dialogue that bring together those civil society organizations which represent the widest possible range of actors; and
- specific outputs that change the lives of the poor by bringing together FAO's technical expertise with Civil Society outreach and local knowledge, given that Civil Society has increasingly demonstrated capacities and potential in programme and project design, execution and implementation at regional, national and subnational levels.

10. Maintaining FAO's neutrality and impartiality is fundamental to ensure the reputation and the work of the Organization, and to safeguard FAO's unique comparative advantage as an honest global broker. To ensure this impartiality, this strategy: ensures that the rules and procedures of FAO's Governing bodies are not altered in any way; is accompanied by a robust monitoring and evaluation system; and describes the risk assessment system in place for each formal collaboration with Civil Society.

11. Along with tools, procedures and criteria for partnering with Civil Society, FAO will establish a number of performance indicators that, with an output-oriented and results-based approach, will enable the effective monitoring and evaluation of new partnerships. To ensure transparency and accountability, FAO will publish the results of these evaluations online.

12. Partnerships and collaborations will be entered into on the basis of accepting and respecting a number of principles relevant for each party. Partnerships do not necessarily entail accepting all of each other's views or positions. All partnerships will be established on the basis of accepting certain principles and agreeing on outputs, deliverables and results, without compromising the individual nature of the respective partners.

13. Civil society includes a broad category of organizations. For the purpose of this Strategy, three main groups of organizations have been identified: Member-Based Organizations; Non-Governmental Organizations; and Social Movements. These three main categories show that civil society is more than just large NGOs. There are multiple types of organizations across different constituencies (farmers; pastoralists and herders; fishers and fish workers; forest dwellers; consumers; landless; urban poor; NGOs; women; youth; agricultural workers; and indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities), and a balanced representation of these organizations is essential for the empowerment, ownership, success and sustainability of policy decisions made.

14. This strategy does not refer to collaboration and partnerships with: academia, research institutions or philanthropic foundations. Food producer organizations, given their specific nature and relevance in relation to FAO's mandate, will be considered separately. In principle, food producer organizations will fall under the realm of the private sector strategy, unless they express otherwise and comply with the criteria of civil society organizations. These cases will be analyzed individually.

15. On the basis that final decisions for new ways of partnering with Civil Society are subject to the role, competences and mandates of FAO's governing and subsidiary bodies, this document lays out objectives, guiding principles and benefits that civil society and FAO have in many common areas where civil society can contribute to FAO's work and vice versa. The Strategy provides the tools and know-how to increase the number of quality and effective partnerships with civil society. Six main areas of collaboration have been identified: policy dialogue; normative work; field programme; knowledge sharing and capacity development; advocacy and communication; and joint mobilization and use of resources.

16. FAO has long been working and collaborating with civil society organizations where common principles, goals, and areas of interest bring FAO and civil society together. The Strategy is a way of organizing these forms of collaboration, based on each other's knowledge, expertise, technical capacities, and human and material resources. By combining efforts, FAO and civil society become stronger and more capable of individually and collaboratively providing longer-lasting results in the reduction of food insecurity and the elimination of poverty.

Suggested action by the Council

The Council is invited to note that the refinements to the draft Strategy for partnerships with civil society requested by the Joint Meeting of the Programme and Finance Committees are fully and consistently reflected in the current document. Accordingly, the Council is invited to approve the Strategy for partnerships with civil society as a fundamental element in FAO's overall Strategy on the use of partnerships to achieve its Strategic Objectives.

Queries on the substantive content of this document may be addressed to:

Ms Marcela Villarreal
Acting Director
Office for Communication, Partnerships and Advocacy (OCP)
Tel. +39 06570 52346

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I. Introduction

A. Preface

1. Today's world continues to face problems of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, despite the efforts made by numerous countries, organizations and institutions to eradicate them. Over the years, these problems have become increasingly more complex and interconnected, as evidenced by the many food-related crises of recent years. This means that the solution cannot simply be to intervene on isolated symptoms of a larger, more complex and multifaceted problem. It also means that efforts to tackle these issues cannot be solely of one organization or institution. This requires the decisions, perspectives, capacities, knowledge, skills and influence of multiple actors in order to achieve one common goal: A world free from hunger.

2. Civil society has come to play a crucial role in the area of food security. It has also increasingly shown its capacities and potential in programme and project design, execution and implementation at regional, national and subnational levels. In recent years, it has succeeded in opening up areas for dialogue with governments and other actors at regional and global levels, contributing their capacities and expertise to higher quality policy and normative discussions.

3. The goals of this document are to provide: i) a framework for enhanced partnerships¹ between FAO and civil society organizations, recognizing them as central actors to empower, protect and improve the livelihoods of those most affected by food insecurity, malnutrition, poverty and natural disasters; and ii) guidance on how to engage in these partnerships, identify new stakeholders and potential partners, and, while maintaining FAO's fundamental principles of neutrality and impartiality, work together with civil society towards reducing food insecurity, poverty and all their consequences. Given the emphasis that member states and FAO have given to accelerating the decentralization process, the strategy has been conceived to be a useful tool for FAO staff working at decentralized level, to effectively engage in partnership with appropriate civil society actors. This document outlines three general categories of civil society organization (member-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, and social movements).

4. Academia, research institutions, foundations, federations, and cooperatives do not fall under this strategy. Food producer organizations², given their specific nature and the relevance of their work in relation to FAO's mandate, are considered separately. In principle, food producer organizations will fall under the realm of the private sector strategy, unless they state otherwise and comply with the criteria of Civil Society Organizations.

5. As a corporate umbrella document, this Strategy indicates the direction and emphasis of collaboration between FAO and civil society. The Strategy will have a set of complementary tools to be seen as "living documents,"³ which will be discussed and updated progressively. These tools will help FAO staff in selecting appropriate civil society partners, monitor and evaluate partnerships, and manage potential risks, which could affect FAO's reputation as a neutral and impartial forum.

¹ For the purpose of simplicity in this document, the term "partnership" has been used to refer to collaboration, agreement, alliance, engagement, etc.

² FAO tends to consider small-scale producers under the scope of civil society, whereas larger foundations or commercial food organizations are usually treated as Private Sector. However, the division is not clear and overlapping can and does exist. Therefore these organizations may be considered on a case-by-case basis to determine under which Strategy they more appropriately fall. Given FAO's mandate, FAO will work to ensure adequate representation and participation of producers organizations at FAO meetings and processes in order for their voices to be sufficiently considered and reflected. This will be done according to either the Private Sector strategy or Civil Society strategy, based on the nature of the organization.

³ These include a handbook with useful criteria on how to identify and select relevant civil society partners to maximise synergies while assessing and reducing risks for the Organization; monitoring and evaluation indicators, risk management tools, and capacity development material for both FAO staff and civil society leaders. In addition, the Partnerships and Advocacy Branch (OCPA) is developing a Web portal with useful tips.

B. Background

6. In the 1990s, driven by the increasing prominence of civil society in global debates on different models of agricultural development, FAO assumed a new approach aimed at enhancing collaboration and debate with civil society (including different social movements, NGOs, community organizations, etc.). This new approach was catalytic in ensuring broader civil society engagement at the World Food Summit, held in Rome in 1996.

7. In 1999, FAO adopted its “Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations”,⁴ acknowledging the changing roles of governments, civil society and the Organization, in an effort to increase both its legitimacy and efficiency in decision-making. In 2002, the World Food Summit: *five years later* gave a strong impetus to FAO’s decentralized relations with civil society through its extensive involvement in the Summit process. As a result, FAO’s regional offices designated civil society focal points to strengthen relations with civil society at regional level.

8. The Independent External Evaluation and Immediate Plan of Action supported the need to expand partnerships with different stakeholders and made a general recommendation to increase the level of collaboration and agreements with civil society organizations that share FAO’s mandate.

9. In 2012 the Director-General launched a Strategic Thinking Process to determine the future direction of the Organization. As part of this process, the Director-General reaffirmed and enhanced the importance of establishing partnerships in order to carry out the Organization’s mandate, reasserting civil society as a key ally of FAO.

10. This Strategy, deeply rooted in the recommendations received and lessons learnt over the past years, is an update of the 1999 FAO Policy and Strategy for Cooperation with Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organizations. The document has been finalized following a global consultation process involving all FAO Senior Management and key staff at headquarters and decentralized offices, as well as a wide range of civil society constituencies and member states.⁵

II. Scope and objectives

A. Rationale

11. The Organization acknowledges that eradicating hunger, malnutrition and poverty is a fight that can only be won by joining forces with different stakeholders. FAO recognizes civil society as one of these key stakeholders.

12. Aligned with the 2011 Corporate Strategy on Capacity Development,⁶ this document elaborates on the key principles established in the 2010 FAO Organization-wide Strategy on Partnerships, supporting the Strategic Objectives and applying the core functions of the reviewed Strategic Framework.

13. The Civil Society and Private Sector strategies are articulated in that they are both based on the same guiding principles, follow the same risk management system, and concern certain organizations which, due to their nature, could dwell within either the realm of civil society or private sector. As mentioned, these cases will be analyzed individually by OCPP.

⁴ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x2214e/x2214e00.htm>

⁵ A total of 50 organizations sent their comments to IPC, which coordinated them, summarized comments received and submitted them to FAO for their inclusion in the draft strategy

⁶ The 2011 Corporate Strategy on Capacity Development calls for the involvement of all national and regional stakeholders, including civil society, in the prioritization, planning and programming processes, as the success of national and regional programmes depends on the level of ownership and leadership of member countries http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/newsroom/docs/Summary_Strategy_PR_E.pdf .

B. Objectives

14. The main objective of this Strategy is for civil society and FAO to work together in reducing poverty and eliminating food insecurity. It will inform member states and will provide FAO staff with practical guidance on how to develop effective partnerships and alliances with civil society, ensuring the Organization's independence and neutrality, while working to reach the following specific objectives:

- a) enhance and establish more inclusive processes for policy dialogue, technical management and sharing of expertise and knowledge, particularly at field and operational levels, between FAO, countries and civil society;
- b) ensure that at the decentralized level, collaborations and partnerships between FAO and Civil Society take place during all stages of programme and project development, not simply during the implementation phase;
- c) develop the capacity and ability of civil society organizations for their participation⁷ in enhanced forms of policy dialogue on food systems;
- d) improve FAO's knowledge and capacity to work in partnerships with civil society; and
- e) help countries in achieving the five Strategic Objectives as 'development outcomes' in FAO's reviewed Strategic Framework. The Strategy supports in particular the delivery of outcomes addressing partnerships under Strategic Objective 1 on hunger eradication and Strategic Objective 3 on poverty reduction.

15. FAO has two major comparative advantages in working with different stakeholders: it is a neutral and impartial forum for discussions; and it is a knowledge Organization capable of obtaining practical results in improving the lives of the poor and food insecure

16. These two points have been identified as pillars on which to base this strategy. Therefore, while the strategy foresees six areas of engagement, it can be said that FAO will collaborate with civil society to ensure two main outcomes:

- *Process-driven interventions*: focus on the participation and inclusion of a wide range of relevant civil society organizations, ensuring balanced representation among geographic areas, types of organizations and the various constituencies, in order to better inform and influence policy and normative discussions and debates.
- *Output-driven interventions*: on technical work at field level, in which FAO and partner organizations work towards common outputs. These outputs change the lives of the poor by bringing together FAO's technical expertise with Civil Society's outreach and local knowledge.

⁷ This strategy promotes the continued inclusion and participation of civil society in various areas of policy dialogue and discussions. Not only does this ensure all voices are heard and considered, it often raises the quality of policy discussions. However, the decision-making role is ultimately that of member states.

C. Underlying principles for this strategy

17. Quality partnerships with civil society should be based on mutually accepted principles, mutual respect and common goals. These principles are:

Mutual Principles:

- a) A partnership is a voluntary association of actors sharing a common interest; based on mutual respect and acknowledgement of each organization's capacities; built upon the comparative advantage and knowledge of each organization, and not compromising the position, opinions and nature of any of the partners.
- b) Respect of UN principles, human rights and dignity, gender equality, and in particular, the right to food.

FAO's acknowledgement of relevant principles for civil society:

- a) **Autonomy and self-organization:** once granted access to a forum, civil society can autonomously organize, deciding how best to occupy the different spaces of dialogue and express its positions.
- b) **Internal consultations:** civil society will carry out internal consultations among its constituencies to establish their positions and identify their representatives.
- c) **Sufficient time:** civil society organizations need time to cascade relevant information to their main offices and members prior to consolidating and presenting a joint position.

Civil society acknowledgement of relevant principles for FAO:

- a) **Member-based structure:** FAO is an organization made up of member countries to which they are accountable.⁸ The nature of the Organization entails agreements and adoption of standards of other UN and intergovernmental bodies.
- b) **Neutral forum:** FAO can provide a neutral forum for dialogue and debate.
- c) **Knowledge organization:** FAO is a knowledge organization, not a funding institution. In those cases when the Organization funds civil society, FAO's rules and regulations apply.

18. Successful partnerships result from both parties having a desire to work together towards achieving shared goals. However, working together does not necessarily mean that parties must share the same positions, visions, or outlooks. FAO provides a neutral and impartial forum for policy dialogue, and this must be maintained even within its partnerships with other organizations.

D. Decentralization

19. Since 2012, the FAO decentralization process has been put on fast track. The renewed impetus on decentralization, following the Independent External Evaluation and Immediate Plan of Action for FAO renewal recommendations, coincide with the requests from civil society to foster more relations with FAO at global, regional and national levels.⁹

20. While global partnerships with civil society organizations, networks, platforms and mechanisms are important for the improvement of food security in member countries and for FAO's work, the implementation of this Strategy will be focused on working at decentralized level. The main goal is, through a bottom-up approach, to empower local actors to be fully engaged with FAO in its

⁸ FAO can invite individuals from civil society to FAO meetings, based on their personal/professional capacity, as well as organizations. In these cases, FAO can select directly the professional or organization. However, they will not be considered as representatives of civil society, but as individuals.

⁹ Including all the sub-national levels: community, local, district, provincial.

activities and programmes, therefore increasing the likelihood of ownership, and long-term sustainable results. Otherwise, global discussions risk to lose grasp on reality and on the problems faced by the poor and vulnerable.

21. At the country level, FAO can play a catalytic role in facilitating and supporting member states to increase dialogue with civil society, by providing expertise in technically-related discussions or neutral debate forum. In this way, FAO can contribute to creating a conducive environment for dialogue between civil society organizations and member states.

III. Definition and types of civil society organizations

A. Civil Society: A definition

22. In 1998 the UN defined civil society as: “the sphere in which social movements organize themselves around objectives, constituencies, and thematic interests.”¹⁰ Civil society is a broad category which encompasses a wide variety of organizations, which although different, often share certain common goals, resources and/or approach in order to maximize their decision-making capacity, advocacy and knowledge.

23. This strategy considers civil society as those non-state actors who fit within three main categories (i.e. member-based organization, non-governmental organization and social movement, as described below) that work in the areas related to FAO’s mandate.

24. Special consideration must be given to food producers organizations, which are central to FAO’s work. As explained, these organizations will fall under the scope of the Private Sector Strategy, unless they specifically request to be considered as civil society and if they fit the criteria of the categorizations laid out in this strategy.

25. For the scope of this Strategy, any national or international non-governmental organization (INGO), association or foundation which has been set up by private entities, therefore stemming from a profit-seeking perspective, as well as cooperatives, which generally have for-profit orientations, will be considered under the Strategy for partnerships with the private sector. In instances where the divide is not clear, for example cooperatives which are established by social movements, FAO will look at them on a case-by-case basis to determine whether they fall more appropriately under the domain of civil society or private sector.

B. Types of civil society organizations (CSOs)

26. Due to their varied nature, it is difficult to group all civil society organizations into rigid categories where overlap is likely to exist. This Strategy identifies three types of organizations: Member-based organizations (MBOs); Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Social Movements (SMs).

27. For organizations which do not have a legal entity, a decision will have to be made on a case by case basis. Formal agreements require a legal structure. Those civil society platforms or community based organizations with no legal status, will have to seek the assistance of a civil society organization with legal status if a formal agreement with FAO is to be signed. When collaborations are informal, particularly at the field level with community based organizations, one of the main contributions from FAO can be assisting them in formalizing their organization.

Member-based organizations (MBOs)

28. Member-based organizations are locally-based organizations made up of stakeholders who want to work towards a variety of common goals, such as managing common resources, lobbying their governments on certain issues, or helping to satisfy local needs by providing goods or services. Their

¹⁰ UNGA A/53/170 “Arrangements and practices for the interaction of non-governmental organizations in all activities of the United Nations System”

<http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N98/202/59/pdf/N9820259.pdf?OpenElement>

primary objective as an organization is to improve their livelihoods and those of their members. MBOs work to be self-sustainable, requiring members to contribute in some way, e.g. through paying an annual fee or providing services.

29. MBOs are democratic in structure, and are subject to local laws and regulations. This provides internal accountability to their members and enhances the legitimacy of these organizations. MBO leaders, often from the most vulnerable communities, are elected democratically by their members.

30. These organizations may include small farmers, fishers or forest dwellers that seek to better manage their commonly used resources. Their activities are aimed at impacting policies or providing public (not private) goods or service where there may be a gap in services provided by the State or the Private Sector. These can range from training their members to performing advocacy and lobbying activities.

31. Some examples of MBOs are: Mexico's Rural Development Associations, sponsored by FAO under the Special Programme for Food Security; the foundation Promoción e Investigación de Productos Andinos (PROINPA), which experiments sustainable agricultural farming combining modern techniques with ancient practices; and the local agricultural research committees (CIALS) in the Honduran Hillside, sponsored by the International Center for Tropical Agriculture.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)¹¹

32. NGOs are formally constituted, legally registered, free from commercial interests, non-profit organizations that provide services, information and expertise, sensitize public opinion, and conduct advocacy activities.

33. For years, FAO has been working with NGOs on policy discussions, normative work and field initiatives (e.g. collaborating in assessments, exchanging technical support and knowledge on food security and nutrition, etc.). At the same time, and depending on the size of the NGO, FAO has also capitalized on their capacities when implementing its field programme. NGOs can also play a vital role in facilitating the quick delivery of emergency response interventions to affected populations, particularly in sudden onset emergency and conflict situations.

34. An example is the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF), which is cooperating with the Fisheries and Aquaculture Department in the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries for the benefit of small-scale fisheries and fishworkers.

Social movements (SMs)¹²

35. This category includes platforms, committees, mechanisms, federations and networks of advocacy-based and policy-oriented organizations which promote claims or rights related to specific constituencies (e.g. land-holding farmers, fishers and fish workers, pastoralists and herders, forest dwellers, rural landless workers, urban poor, etc.).

36. Social movements emerge from historical circumstances, sharing similar goals, promoting awareness and attempting to influence policy-makers in relation to certain development, social and/or political issues, some of which coincide with FAO's mandate. While their legal status¹³ and characteristics may vary, their common trait is that they work to strengthen the capacities of the

¹¹ A specific subcategory within this group is academic institutions and non-for-profit centres of knowledge, which produce high-quality information and knowledge in areas of work related to FAO's mandate.

¹² Member-based organizations are different from social movements in that they respond directly to their members. Social movements are coordination instances of different organizations, which may include MBOs as well as NGOs.

¹³ FAO works with a number of social movements and platforms, some of which do not have legal status. However, many of these movements are made up of MBOs or NGOs which as individual organizations are legally registered. In these cases, FAO will have an arrangement with a designated legally-registered organization from within the movement who can take responsibility for the work being carried out on behalf of the whole social movement.

organizations under their coordination-umbrella to advocate for the common interests, concerns, views and goals of their constituencies.¹⁴

37. Some examples of social movements with which FAO has collaborated are: La Via Campesina, the Civil Society Mechanism, and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty.

Indigenous peoples and other ethnic minorities

The needs of Indigenous peoples and ethnic minority groups are acknowledged by FAO and recognized in the 2010 FAO Policy on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples¹⁵. This policy takes into consideration the fact that among the most vulnerable, indigenous peoples and ethnic minority groups deserve particular attention. It is estimated that although indigenous peoples represent 5% of the world population, they comprise about 15% of the total poor. FAO considers indigenous and tribal peoples, with their wealth of ancestral knowledge, to be key strategic partners in the fight against hunger. The increasing participation of indigenous groups and other ethnic minorities in public policy debates and fora is an important step towards strengthening their rights and improving their situation.

IV. Mutual benefits and areas of collaboration

A. Mutual benefits

38. FAO recognizes civil society as a key partner in the fight against food insecurity. By prioritizing the establishment of partnerships with civil society, FAO aims to capitalize on the capacities, knowledge and skills civil society possesses, and ensure that any assistance provided by FAO to vulnerable people is delivered in a coordinated and accountable way. These mutual benefits provide the basics for FAO to engage in partnership with CSOs. Criteria for decision-making in this regard are developed in the Annexes to this document.

39. FAO acknowledges the following comparative advantages of civil society organizations: their outreach capacity to the poor and vulnerable; their mobilization and advocacy capacity; the representativeness of their broader networks; their key role in community-based management of natural resources; and their knowledge of local contexts. Similarly, civil society obtains different benefits when collaborating with FAO. The following table summarizes some of these benefits:

<u>Benefits for FAO</u>	<u>Benefits for civil society</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion in discussions of isolated and vulnerable groups. - Better representativeness in debates and discussions. - Increased advocacy and mobilization capacity. - Complementary outreach and capacity for field activities, including improved emergency response. - Enhanced ownership of endorsed policies/strategies. - Joint development of improved forms of governance. - Access to resources (human, physical, knowledge). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FAO provides access to a neutral forum for discussions <i>vis-à-vis</i> private sector, member countries and other stakeholders. - Access to information, capacity building, technical knowledge and expertise on key food security areas. - Ability to place items for discussion in agenda for high-level fora. - FAO can facilitate discussion between civil society and governments at all levels, especially in cases where tension exists between the two sectors. - FAO can also engage in promoting partnership between civil society and governments.

¹⁴ OCPP is developing indicators to be able to identify and monitor the governance structures and levels of accountability and representativeness of social movements in order to ensure that these movements are in fact relating to and representing the people and organizations they claim to be.

¹⁵ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1857e/i1857e00.htm>

B. Areas of Collaboration

40. FAO and CSOs have jointly identified six areas of collaboration¹⁶:

1) Policy dialogue: FAO will establish fora for policy dialogue on issues related to food and nutrition security, including civil society in the dialogue together with governments and decision-makers, thus increasing ownership, democracy, accountability and sustainability of policy adoption and implementation (e.g. FAO Regional Conferences, Rio+20).

2) Normative activities: FAO is engaged in supporting the involvement of civil society along with member states, research institutions and other interested stakeholders in the development and implementation of codes of conduct, global conventions and regulatory frameworks in areas related to FAO's mandate (e.g. Codex Alimentarius¹⁷; Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture; Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests).¹⁸

3) Field programme: to strengthen local capacities and project outreach in a more cost-effective manner, FAO will promote dialogue and partnerships at field level with civil society to design, implement and monitor quality and sustainable local initiatives, programmes, projects and emergency responses. FAO acknowledges that the chain of accountability to affected populations travels from the funding source to the end recipient, requiring FAO and other agencies to discuss and negotiate with their partners (e.g. collaboration with the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement; the food security cluster and its humanitarian partners; forestry national fire surveillance systems with local NGOs; seed multiplication in Haiti with local NGOs).

4) Knowledge sharing and capacity development: FAO is in a unique position to promote and facilitate the flow of global knowledge on agriculture and nutrition issues, and make it accessible to all sectors of society. However, FAO will also capitalize on the detailed knowledge CSOs have from the grassroots levels and regional contexts, which will greatly complement the stock of knowledge and technical expertise that FAO promotes. This exchange will allow FAO to better respond to local contexts and needs (e.g. the Gambia Forestry Department worked with FAO and local civil society institutions, such as the National Consultancy on Forestry Extension Services and Training, to institutionalize a step-by-step participatory enterprise development tool that supports the sustainability of transfer of forest resources to the communities).

5) Advocacy and communication: FAO and civil society partners will mutually raise public awareness and build strong support and political will towards reducing poverty and eliminating food insecurity by capitalizing on each other's extensive experiences, networks and outreach for advocacy and communication. FAO and civil society's joint advocacy at both Headquarters and decentralized levels can together reach grassroots audiences and support raising their interests and concerns to decision-makers, informing public opinion (e.g. FAO has been discussing joint advocacy actions at the global level with a number of large INGOs). Any advocacy activity on areas related to FAO's mandate will take into consideration that FAO is an organization of member states and therefore subject to the UN principles of neutrality and impartiality.

6) Joint mobilization and use of resources: large international and national NGOs, foundations, and academic institutions have considerable stocks of human and financial capital, supplies, assets and capacity development strengths. Some of these entities are specifically mandated and funded to provide support to UN agencies with a range of services. In turn, grassroots CSOs will have numerous contacts, not only at grassroots level, but also with large formal and informal social networks and

¹⁶ The complementing documents to this strategy outline the way forward in implementing this strategy as well as how to ensure representativeness and inclusive participation from different civil society actors, particularly at the national level.

¹⁷ The participations of different stakeholders as appropriate, in these Technical Committees, will be on the basis of the decisions taken by the members.

¹⁸ These normative frameworks and guidelines have resulted from negotiations and discussions at FAO's Technical Committees, such as the Committees on Forestry (COFO), Fisheries (COFI) and Agriculture (COAG).

platforms. FAO will increase cooperation with some organizations to jointly mobilize and use the wide human, physical and financial resources available, increase the scale and focus of FAO's technical support, improve the coordination capacity of all stakeholders and ensure improved Accountability to Affected Populations¹⁹ (e.g. humanitarian organizations have stand-by partner agreements with FAO through which staff, equipment and supplies can be made available for FAO's deployment missions when responding to crises).

V. Implementing the Strategy: Institutional Arrangements and Tools for Collaboration

A. Institutional Arrangements

41. Under the general guidance of the Director-General, the Partnerships and Advocacy Branch (OCP) in the Office for Communication, Partnerships and Advocacy (OCP) will be the lead unit for the implementation of this Strategy, providing support and working in close collaboration with FAO staff in technical units and decentralized offices. OCP will assist FAO staff at all levels in developing and maintaining regular dialogue with civil society to develop fluid relationships, build mutual trust and foster joint activities and collaboration.

42. The strategy encourages a bottom-up approach, and once endorsed, foresees a period of work in which five regions, with support from FAO headquarters, will prepare an Action Plan for working with civil society. OCP will pay special attention to supporting decentralized offices and, together with key units in FAO, will develop clear tools to explain how headquarters and decentralized offices will work together on the implementation of partnerships at sub-national levels. OCP will promote mobilizing resources and coordinate the monitoring and evaluation of the whole process together with the decentralized offices.

43. Civil society focal points in decentralized offices will also require extensive capacity development from the Partnerships and Advocacy Branch. In addition, OCP will carry out a stock-taking exercise to identify the existing collaborations in place in the different FAO departments.

44. Depending on whether FAO is working at national, regional or global level, FAO may lean towards working with specific 'levels' of organization. In principle, FAO will give priority to working with those Organizations working at the relevant levels. (e.g. : National level (including district, provincial and local): working with national civil society organizations; Regional level: working with regional civil society organizations, networks or platforms; and Global level: working with global organizations, platforms or mechanisms.

45. This division, however, is not exclusive. There are instances in which a national organization may be better able to provide essential input, expertise or capacities in FAO activities taking place at the regional level, while a regional or global organization or network may be better suited to reaching local or community areas for a specific national activity. Efforts will also be made, especially at regional and global level, to ensure the inclusion and/or participation of various types of organizations, which may bring forth different approaches and views, as appropriate.

B. Tools for collaboration

46. Over the years, FAO has developed a number of administrative tools, procedures and practices²⁰ to collaborate with civil society organizations. Collaboration covers a wide range of

¹⁹ In 2011, through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, FAO committed to promoting Accountability to Affected Populations with its partners and to incorporating these commitments into partnership agreements. A guidance note on Accountability to Affected Populations is being prepared.

²⁰ Civil society organizations have requested on several occasions that FAO review and upgrade some of these tools to better fit their needs, especially those of social movements who lack proper legal status. FAO acknowledges the limitations of some of these tools and is discussing internally how to best address this problem.

thematic areas and takes various forms such as policy dialogue, normative work, field programme work, knowledge sharing, capacity development, advocacy and resource mobilization. A number of institutional tools are used:

1) Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)

47. MoUs can be developed by FAO in order to establish a framework for collaboration of significant importance with civil society organizations.

2) Exchanges of letters

48. If collaboration is limited to a reduced period of time, or if its scope is more limited, and does not entail any financial commitments, a more informal exchange of letters may be an appropriate tool. An exchange of letters can be used, for example, to carry out a joint assessment or to coordinate actions while implementing field activities. The approval process is similar to that of MoUs.

3) Letters of Agreement (LoAs)

49. Letters of Agreement (LoAs) may constitute a useful administrative tool for contracting services from civil society organizations. The scope of LoAs is generally limited to contracting services from non-commercial entities (e.g. organizing a meeting in regional, subregional or national offices; implementing a transboundary animal disease surveillance programme with local NGOs, etc.). LoAs entail a transfer of resources from FAO to a registered non-profit organization in exchange for pre-defined services and are governed by Section 507 of FAO Administrative Manual under the overall responsibility of the Procurement Service (CSAP) and technical units.

4) Formal relations

50. Some CSOs with international status and governance mechanisms have formal relations with FAO and may be invited to attend FAO's meetings as observers. The relevant regime is defined in FAO's Basic Texts which foresee that formal relations with an international non-governmental organization may take one of three forms according to the importance of its field of activity in relation to the activities of FAO, whatever the degree of cooperation envisaged in the common field of activity. These are: consultative status, specialized consultative status or liaison status.

51. However, it is important to stress that a very large number of CSOs which do not have formal relations with FAO are now able to participate in many FAO meetings and fora on the basis of ad hoc, pragmatic arrangements that have been developed in the course of the past years. Ideally, new procedures may need to be defined for CSOs participation in meetings. However, the definition of general procedures applicable throughout the Organization and to all CSOs is a complex process, because of the differentiated nature of the CSOs, the different mandate and status of bodies and meetings of the Organization and the fact that there may not be full consensus among the membership on the matter. The issue remains under active consideration by the Secretariat.

5) Partnership Committee for review of financial and other agreements

52. In 2010, the Director General established the Partnership Committee²¹ for the review of financial and other agreements which examines partnerships with non-governmental and inter-governmental organizations. Review by the Committee is aimed primarily at ensuring compliance with a number of principles and guidelines, and specify measures, conditions and contractual clauses as appropriate to avoid potential problems related to conflict of interest, image, governance and codes of conduct.

6) Multi-Donor Trust Funds to support civil society participation

53. In 2011, a Multi-Donor Trust Fund for the participation of civil society in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was established for donors to allocate resources to support civil society participation in the CFS.

²¹ The composition of the Partnership committee is being reviewed and soon will be made public

VI. Risk Assessment

54. FAO plays an important role as the lead UN technical agency and knowledge organization on food and agriculture issues, in part by being a neutral and impartial forum for policy dialogue and debate. Increasing civil society partnerships, in this regard, may raise risks which could potentially jeopardize these qualities. Therefore, this strategy will be accompanied with adequate mechanisms to identify and manage potential risks (e.g. conflicts of interest; undue influence on standard setting; unfair advantages to certain organizations).

55. The risk assessment process involves three main steps: i) initial screening²² and due diligence by OCPP; ii) full analysis and assessment by the Partnership Committee²³ and Legal Office; iii) acceptance of agreements by the Partnership Committee and final signature of the Director General or delegated ADG.

56. Thorough risk assessment will be ensured and a monitoring system will be put in place to keep track of ongoing partnerships. Based on monitoring results, the risk assessment process may be further improved as more experience is gained in this area..

57. Full transparency will be ensured by publishing on the OCPP website the selection criteria as well as an up-to-date list of approved partnerships.

VII. Monitoring and evaluation of partnerships

58. The Monitoring and Evaluation System will provide FAO with a set of indicators against which to measure performance that can be evaluated and reported on as appropriate. This system will assist the Organization in improving the quality of its partnerships and in introducing corrections in the implementation of the strategy based on the information generated.

59. OCP, together with key FAO units, using its tools, procedures and criteria for partnering with Civil Society, will develop a monitoring and evaluation system, designing progress indicators and determining means of verification.

60. With a more output-oriented approach based on results, FAO will be able to enable effective monitoring and subsequent evaluation of new partnerships. The monitoring system will be linked to FAO's corporate information and project management tools and will not imply complex ad hoc reporting from the technical units and field offices. Evaluation of the impact of partnerships between FAO and civil society will be based upon the data provided by the monitoring system.

61. In order to enhance transparency in the management of partnerships with Civil Society, regular updates will be published on the Partnerships Website. FAO will publish the results from the evaluation online.

²² The initial screening is informed by the Principles and Guidelines for FAO Cooperation with Civil Society as outlined in the 1999 Policy and Strategy..

²³ The Partnerships Committee is chaired by the Director-General and composed by senior management (cf. Director-General Bulletin 2010/22, under revision, in order to ensure avoiding bottlenecks for timely decisions and actions).