

The role of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on Food systems and Nutrition: How can we promote cross sector Policy Convergence?

The Director General, Food and Agriculture Organization

The Chairperson, Committee on Food Security

Colleague Ministers

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen

I bring you greetings from H.E. Rtd Brigadier Dr Julius Maada Bio, the President of Sierra Leone. It is a pleasure also to thank the Government of Zimbabwe for hosting this Conference and the Minister of Agriculture of Zimbabwe. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Chairperson for the Committee on Food Security (Thanawat Tiensin) for inviting me to speak on behalf of the Government and people of Sierra Leone at the occasion of the thirty first (31st) session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa on “**The role of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on food systems and nutrition, how to promote cross sector policy convergence**”, I am deeply honored to make a statement at the Committee on World Food Security session in relation to how the implementation of the VGGT in the context of National Food Security has led to concrete results in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone Government faces numerous obstacles in achieving progress towards poverty reduction and shared prosperity. The country’s legal and regulatory frameworks remain obsolete, contradictory and highly fragmented, particularly in relation to land administration and land management. This poses huge concern to equitable access to land and food security.

Eradication of hunger and poverty, and the sustainable use of the environment, depend mostly on how people, communities and others gain access to land, fisheries and forests. The livelihoods of many, particularly the rural poor, are

based on secure and equitable access to and control over these resources. They are the source of food and shelter; the basis for social, cultural and religious practices; and a central factor in economic growth.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, since the Government of Sierra Leone made a high political commitment for the implementation of the VGGT in 2014, the country has made huge success in wide ranging policy and legislative reforms with the aim of harmonising existing policy and legal framework governing tenure, increasing coordination and collaboration among relevant stakeholders in the land, fisheries and forestry sectors, and analysing existing non-judicial grievances as a redress mechanism.

The implementation of the VGGT in Sierra Leone has underscored remarkable achievements in the governance of land, fisheries, agriculture and forestry sector. I am happy to inform you that the 2015 National Land Policy for Sierra Leone, which has been identified as one of the best land policies on the continent (Africa) was inspired by the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines. The overall aspiration of the new National Land Policy is to improve upon and strengthen the existing land administration systems and land laws. The Policy also recognizes the need for new approaches and procedures for establishing property rights in ways that would encourage investment and rising productivity (especially in agriculture) and give landholders and local communities a greater stake in Sierra Leone's economic future, and to provide transparent and accountable governance of the country's considerable natural resources.

Consequently, under the implementation framework of the Voluntary Guidelines and National Land Policy. A draft National Land Commission and Customary Land Rights Bills have been produced in March 2020 with support from FAO, World Bank and other donor partners. The land rights bill clearly identifies various customary land rights and customary tenancies, removes trusteeship of customary land from Chiefdom Council and makes clear that ownership is

directly vested in families and communities, it put management and decision making in the hands of the land rights holders and promote more democratic decision-making process in land governance. The bills are expected to be ratified by parliament before the end of FY 2020.

Under the UN-Peace Building Fund initiative, the central Government has also commenced to test the implementation of key provisions of the National Land Policy. The provision that is currently being tested is the “**Clarification and Protection of Customary Land Rights**”. Between FY 2018 and 2019, a total of 34,000 acres of family land rights across the country were clarified and protected with focus on the land rights of women and girl child. Lessons learnt were very useful toward the formulation of the draft Customary Land Rights Bill. This initiative also developed the capacities of over 1000 actors to advocate for women’s land rights. 85% of the local actors trained were women.

I am also happy to inform you that through the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines and National Land Policy, the central Government through the Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA) has developed a draft Responsible Investment Approval Process, Due Diligence Tool and Consultation Guide. This effort is to streamline investment approval process in country by removing red tapes and reducing time for endorsement of investment. It is envisioned that this process will establish a one-stop-shop for investment in Sierra Leone and form the basis for review of the Sierra Leone Investment Promotion Act of 2007.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, I am proud to inform you that the hallmark achievement for the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines in Sierra Leone is the establishment of the institutional framework which has been anchored to Government structures. The institutional framework has become a normal way of doing business for the Government of Sierra Leone. Implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines institutional framework over the

years has served as effective vehicle for promoting synergies and collaboration between CSOs, MDAs, Development Partners, Traditional Leaders and Local Authorities. The institutional framework consists of Technical Working Group, Steering Committee and Inter-Ministerial Task Force. The Inter-Ministerial Task Force comprises of Ministers of Lands; Fisheries, Local Government; Justice, Environment; Finance; Mines and Gender. My Ministry serve as the current chair of the Inter-Ministerial Task. The Inter-Ministerial Task Force has been expanded to include Ministers of Water Resources; Economic Planning and Tourism in line with the conclusion of the Inter-Ministerial task Force meeting of 15th September 2020.

All these initiatives are in line with the Government of HE President Julius Maada Bio's New Direction Agenda in line with the key priority enshrined in the new Medium-Term Development Plan. Providing people with fair access to Land, Fisheries, Forest and other natural resources can empower them to enhance food security and increase their income. On the other hand, insecure tenure rights to natural resources may result to limited food availability and poverty.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, the fisheries sector in Sierra Leone contributes about 12% to the GDP. It serves as a socioeconomic engine that generates revenue, provides much needed affordable animal protein for the people of Sierra Leone as well as provides direct employment to about 200,000 people and indirect employment to an estimated 600,000 persons along coastlines.

The President of Sierra Leone has identified the fisheries sector as one of the key sectors that will immensely contribute to economic diversification of the country. To this end, my Ministry has instituted wide ranging policy and regulatory reforms in the fisheries sector with the overall policy objective to create a profitable sector that contributes significantly to socio-economic development

through sustainable management and utilization of our fisheries resources while also conserving the environment.

We have a new Fisheries Act and Fisheries Regulations - all aligned with the provisions of the United Nations Convention of the Laws of the Seas, the United Nations Fish Stock Agreement, the 2009 FAO Port States Measures Agreement, the FAO Compliance Agreements, the FAO Code of Conducts of Responsible Fishing and related international instruments for sustainable fisheries governance.

With these instruments, coupled with the science-based fisheries management plan that has just been finalized, Sierra Leone is now well placed in implementing sustainable conservation and management measures and enforcing regulations with a view to regulating the fishing effort and drastically reducing IUU fishing in the EEZ. In addition, the Ministry of Fisheries is implementing **one month 'Closed Season' (1st -30th April) for** the industrial fishing vessels yearly. This conservation measure is part of the Management Plan contributing to the rebuilding of the declining fish stocks. The Artisanal fishers are allowed to fish to support the domestic landings during that period.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, the cross-cutting collaboration and cooperation among key ministries such as the fisheries, land, forestry and local government has had tremendous strides in achieving the governance of tenure of these natural resources. The Ministry of fisheries in collaboration with the local government has implemented the devolution of the licensing of some categories of artisanal canoes to the local council. The transferring of power to the local council through the decentralization process in a way has given the councils the authority and responsibility to manage the resources in the artisanal sector in collaboration with the Ministry of Fisheries. Additionally, my ministry is promoting stakeholder participation in the management of the resources through the establishment of **37 Community Management Associations (CMAs)** nationwide and

at local coastal fishing communities. These CMAs have responsibilities of co-managing fisheries resources together with Ministry officials including conflict resolutions, popularization of the new Fisheries ACT and other legal instruments.

Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, with all these successes in the governance of these scarce natural resources, it is my fervent belief that we still have challenges as a continent in the effective management of our natural resources with specific reference to the fisheries resources. We need collective responsibility to embrace a consistent policy and legal frameworks for the different regions for the sustainable management of the resources. To achieve this, there is a need for international and regional cooperation to ensure sustainable fisheries management.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen, I want to register my ministry's full support and cooperation in the implementation of project and programmes with the Committee on Food Security and once again on behalf of the entire staff of the ministry I want to thank you for inviting me to be part of this committee and hope that with the achievement of the implementation of the VGGT in Sierra Leone, we will chart a way forward for the responsible governance of land, fisheries and forestry to achieve food security in Sierra Leone.

I thank you all for your attention.