

**Concept note and terms of reference  
for the Contact Group to assist with renewal of the Committee  
on World Food Security (CFS)**

I. The CFS was established as a result of the food crisis of the 1970s and following a recommendation of the World Food Conference of 1974. A distinguishing feature of the CFS is that it is a **worldwide forum**.

The CFS is mandated to:

- Serve as a United Nations forum for review and follow-up of policies concerning world food security;
- Examine issues affecting the world food situation;
- Examine the implications for world food security of other relevant factors;
- Monitor implementation of the Plan of Action adopted by the World Food Summit (added in 1996).

While the CFS has kept the topic of food and agriculture on the international agenda, there is general agreement that it needs to be revitalized so that it is in a position to galvanize political will and technical solutions for issues affecting chronic hunger and food insecurity, and to garner responses to crises in a timely and effective manner.

Calls to strengthen the CFS were made at its 34<sup>th</sup> Session and endorsed at the 135<sup>th</sup> Session of the Council. Furthermore, the Independent External Evaluation report states that the CFS needs to be renewed so that it can focus better on key factors affecting global food security and provide for greater participation of stakeholders in the design and implementation of a food security policy agenda at world, regional and national level. The Special Session of the FAO Conference of November 2008 and the Immediate Plan of Action (IPA, Action 2.63) that was adopted by the Conference, endorsed the need to revitalize the CFS.

A revitalized CFS would need to address the multifaceted dimension of agricultural development and food security by helping to coordinate the actions of all relevant global stakeholders thereby generating appropriate momentum for an integrated, sustainable and effective response to the challenges of food security. In particular, renewal of the CFS should:

Renew the governance of food security so as to:

1. Keep agriculture and food security at the top of the international political agenda and ensure a better link between the technical expertise and decisions to be taken at the political level.
2. Understand factors affecting global food security and associated risks;
3. Create political commitment to address food security and global issues;
4. Ensure that the international community adopts a consistent and prioritized approach to food security that would concurrently:
  - respond to food security emergencies, reduce the likelihood of their future occurrence and promote early response mechanisms;
  - stimulate adequate investment in agriculture and rural development and influence global, regional and national policy decisions on food security programmes and investments;

- help strengthen the governance of food security at all levels;
- as required, address the issue of funds mobilization in support of food security in consultation with concerned international financing institutions .

Moreover, consultations on the GPAFSN should take place in the context of this comprehensive CFS Reform process.

## **II. Creation of a Contact Group/ Group of Friends of the Chair**

To ensure adequate participation in the CFS reform process, on 4 February the Chair sent a note to the Heads of the Regional Groups suggesting the creation of a Contact Group to facilitate the CFS transformation process, to enhance dialogue with all stakeholders and to advise the Chair and Bureau on necessary measures to strengthen the CFS. Subsequently, on 27 February, with the agreement of the Conference Committee on the Independent External Evaluation, a briefing session was convened with the broad and substantial participation of Representatives of the Member States.

Serious, deep-seated renewal of the Committee would require new ideas, inputs from all stakeholders and hard work until the CFS session this October. It is difficult to imagine that CFS renewal can be accomplished by a Bureau comprising a chair and four members. The means for the necessary consultations exist.

The key **functions** of the Group would be to:

- provide recommendations on CFS renewal, especially on aspects concerning governance of world food security, on the basis of a Plan of Action to be discussed at the first meeting of the Group. Particular attention should be given to the possible need of amendments of basic texts in due time in 2009;
- define the role of the CFS, if any, in mobilizing international resources for agricultural development and food security and provide mechanisms to CFS to evaluate the results of international financial mobilization for food security in developing countries;
- initiate a participatory and consultative process through which all stakeholders could be heard and examine the concrete possibilities to launch GPAFSN;
- facilitate consensus on approaches to reform the CFS.

Bearing those functions in mind, the **objectives** would be:

- to play an advisory role to the Bureau of the CFS;
- to pursue a wide consultative process to ensure that priority issues and proposed responses are shared by stakeholders;
- to analyse and learn from past experiences of the CFS, as well as from actions undertaken since the crisis of 1974.

The **central areas of work** would be:

- governance of the Committee on World Food Security;
- analysis and help in defining the future role of the CFS;
- concrete advice on changes needed to fully realize that envisaged role.

**Name.** Regarding the name of the Group there are different possibilities: Contact Group, Consultative Group, Group of Friends of the Chair. Notwithstanding this issue is not fundamental, the name of the group could influence its composition.

**Duration.** No time frame has been set for the Group, but it would be expected to function until October. That would enable it to draft a document for submission to the 35<sup>th</sup> Session of the Committee in October 2009. It would be for the Committee to decide whether the Group should continue or not.

**In brief, the initial results of the work of the Group would be presented to the CFS in October 2009 for possible endorsement by the Conference in November 2009.**

With this in mind, 3 to 4 meetings would be held between now and October (April, late May, July and September).

**Cost.** In principle, the meetings would not incur costs to the FAO regular budget nor affect any of its programmes. Several members could cover their expenses for travel to Rome and could participate in meetings through videoconferencing.

**Members and link with HLTF/HLPE.** The Group must have broad representation to ensure all stakeholders are involved but still limited in size to ensure its effectiveness.

The list of participants proposed in the note of 4 February is NOT exhaustive. It should include the members of the Bureau and representatives of the Regional Groups. The other members have to be drawn from national, regional and international governmental and non-governmental associations, taking into account membership numbers and experience in the field of food security or contact with the Committee. Criteria for the selection of participants from civil society and private sector will be established with the principle of inclusiveness and flexibility in mind.

The view is that there should be at least two representatives from each Regional Group. Furthermore, a representative of the UN High-Level Task Force should also be invited to ensure cohesion between the HLTF activities and the Group of Friends of the Chair. The mandate of the HLTF is to support partnerships at country and regional level for implementing the CFA while the debate on the global partnership should take place in the context of a reformed CFS.

The Group should also include the Chairperson of the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security (HLPE) or their representative, as this body will be another mechanism to strengthen the CFS through the provision of technical input and expertise.

### **III. Next steps:**

This proposal is being distributed to the Regional Groups for the consideration of all Members. The aim is to seek support for the overall process of CFS renewal and other suggestions on the role and composition of the Group. Members need to agree on the following points:

- Advantages and utility of creating a CFS Group;

- Purpose and functions of the Group;
- Composition of the Group.

To conclude, we need to remember that responsibility for transforming the CFS lies in our hands. Let us seize this opportunity to make a positive, creative, viable and lasting contribution.