

# Concept Note on the Global Right to Food Network

## Proposal submitted to international consultation process

### 1. Objective of this Concept Note:

The objective of this Concept Note is to facilitate the international consultation process regarding the proposal to promote and establish a Global Right to Food Network (hereby referred to as the Network).

### 2. Relevance of the Network

The recent aggravation of the chronic world food crisis clearly illustrates not only the incapacity of the existing dominant development models, to ensure food security, but the mere fact that the very same development models has been one of the main causes of hunger and malnutrition in the world. In response to the multiple interrelated global crises - financial, political, food and climate change, - governments, financial players and multinationals have unleashed massive land grabbing processes, which evicted and further threatened millions of peasants, small producers, indigenous peoples and other traditional populations, majority of whom are women, in all continents, but most significantly in Africa. At the same time, unemployment, low wages, and slave-like working conditions, and forced migration continue to plague urban and rural dwellers in most countries. A rapid increase of hunger, malnutrition and other violations of the right to food is evident among these groups.

The persistence of gross violations of the right to food at the global level and the almost absolute impunity that perpetrators of these violations enjoy is the primary reason to gather the engaged movements and organizations in a global movement to advance the right to food struggle.

No single organization can tackle all these challenges alone. We need to join forces among all organizations and movements that are committed to the human rights approach to be able to be heard at the international level and to finally change the policies that keep this degenerating system running. In order to increase right to food accountability at all levels, from the household to the global level, we need to identify accountability gaps, and invite all interested partners to try to close them, according to their capacity.

The need for a Global Right to Food Network is being acknowledged by many actors in the field of the right to food, and especially by civil society groups. Alliances have already been built on issues of joint interest, such as the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR, the FAO Guidelines on the Right to Adequate Food, Agrarian Reform and Land, the Civil Society Mechanism to the Committee on World Food Security, the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch, and the process on the clarification of Extraterritorial Obligations of States under international human rights law. Many actors at the local, national, regional and global level agree on a major challenge: to promote Right to Food Accountability, as a way to overcome the persistence of right to food violations.

A Right to Food Network at the global level is possible and necessary. During the last 25 years, the Human Right to Adequate Food has undergone a staggering evolution. From being

almost unknown to anybody, it is recognized today by the UN and national constitutions; some national governments consider it as a cornerstone to food security and nutrition, and it has been incorporated as an essential standard in the political agendas of civil society organizations around the world working for a world free from hunger. Today, many organizations and movements have taken up the Right to Food as one of their political banners. The network could contribute to a strong accountability component in different struggles.

The future Network will aim to support and strengthen civil society participation in global, regional and national food and nutritional security governance processes to promote and scale-up right to food accountability at all levels. It will facilitate the monitoring of key food related policy fields at national and international levels such as for instance on land, water, fisheries, forestry, livestock, agriculture, rural development, biodiversity, environmental sustainability, income, nutrition, food distribution, food safety, the gender dimension of national and international food related policies; the administrative enforceability and justiciability of the right to food, the extraterritorial obligations (ETO) and the role of intergovernmental and transnational actors, including transnational corporations (TNC). It will foster the development of new instruments to improve protection of human rights, especially right to food defenders.

### **3. The global political context**

From a human rights perspective, the causes for the protracted global food crisis can be seen, as rooted in international and national public policies which have failed to meet obligations under the Human Right to Adequate Food. These policies, linked to the dominant development models, have neither prioritized people's access to the natural, financial and public resources needed to produce food or to the jobs/income needed for them to adequately feed themselves and their families with dignity.

The response of the international community to the crisis demonstrates that there is a significant agreement that new governance mechanisms need to include a human rights approach. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated that the Right to Food should be included in the response to the crisis in order to guide assessment, accountability and action.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have all insisted on the importance to address the land and natural resources issue that is getting out of hand. The FAO is currently drafting Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Land and Natural Resources Tenure with the contribution of the civil society.

The Advisory Committee to the Human Rights Council is currently working on discrimination in the context of the right to food and the need to increase the protection of heavily discriminated groups like peasants, including the adoption of new instruments explicitly recognizing the rights of peasants. These rights would include among others, the right to land, to water and to other natural resources.

The reformed Committee for World Food Security (CFS), together with the civil society, can become a unique and effective platform for guiding international actions towards more inclusive and effective strategies for food security and nutrition. An ambitious goal has been set by the reformed CFS: to elaborate the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSFFSN) through a participatory process at national, regional and global levels

until end of 2012. This process offers the opportunity to effectively establish the right to food accountability as a key feature of future national, regional and global food security and nutrition strategies, including a monitoring mechanism that measures policies under the responsibilities and indicators set by the GSFFSN, and particularly, the FAO Guidelines on the Right to Food.

Many organizations and movements want to ensure that this process will be founded on the basis of the human rights. The creation of a Global Right to Food Network is a way to make our voices heard.

#### **4. Key challenges to be tackled by the Network**

##### **a. Governance and monitoring**

To guarantee that the right to food will play a central role in the global processes newly instituted, the right to food movement must be strengthened. The Global Right to Food Network will support the efforts of the social groups most affected by hunger to formulate food sovereignty and alternative policies based on the right to food. Moreover, the Network will promote joint work of all civil society organizations particularly interested in incorporating the right to adequate food in the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of the Global Strategic Framework on Food Security and Nutrition (GSFFSN) through the Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee for World Food Security (CFS) . The Network is a way to increase the lobbying and accountability capacity for the right to food at international and national level. Through the collaboration of its members, the Network will be able to detect threats, non-compliance and violations of the human rights obligations at the local, national, regional and global level and to widely publicize them.

##### **b. Land**

Using a human rights framework for improving the governance of land and natural resources tenure in the current context is of utmost importance. Land and natural resources are vital for the realization of the full range of human rights of women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups such as peasants, landless rural workers, residents and workers in the informal economy, fisherfolks, pastoralists and ethnic groups. Moreover, a human rights framework means addressing the unequal relationships of power which are behind unjust and unsustainable land tenure structures. It means tackling land tenure institutions that are corrupt and biased against the poor. In that sense, a human rights framework can provide a unique contribution to make land and natural resources tenure governance truly accountable, transparent, democratic and participatory.

Apart from its active participation in the elaboration of the Guidelines on Land Tenure and Natural Resources, the Global Right to Food Network should get involved in other challenges related to natural resources: the increasing dispute between the agro-industrial model and the sustainable small-scale farming, also linked to climate change concerns; land grabbing; agro-fuels expansion; eco-destruction and pollution; the Convention on Peasants' Rights and the FAO instrument to protect small-scale fisheries.

##### **c. ETO**

Considering the unequal power between poor host states and powerful public and private investors and international institutions, international mandatory standards and agreements

based on universal human rights and the extraterritorial human rights obligations of all states are essential to ensure peace and a democratic global order.

Many partners are actively involved in the ETO Consortium which promotes the understanding of ETOs to inform the standard setting in the field of ETOs; addresses breaches of ETOs and will use the upcoming Maastricht ETO Principles as possible terms of reference. More synergies can be established between the ETO Consortium and the others actors of the right to food community through the Global Right to Food Network.

#### **d. Justiciability**

An important work on right to food accountability is the promotion of justiciability and means to prevent, and overcome impunity of right to food violations. Therefore, a particular challenge consists in building partnerships and capacity to use the right to adequate food as a justiciable right in case work at the national level and before the regional human rights bodies (such as the Inter-American Human Rights Commission and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights).

Furthermore, many organizations have been involved at national and international level in the signature and ratification process of the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR. The Global Right to Food Network would play a significant role to strengthen and further promote this campaign, and later to promote the strategic use of this new instrument of international justiciability.

#### **e. Adequate income, food and nutrition**

Adequate income of rural and urban workers, including minimum wage, the rights of migrants (including climate refugees), the rights of women and children to adequate food and nutrition, and basic income (social security), are urgent issues to be tackled, all through a gender perspective. This work should also be related to a rights-based analysis of existing policies and proactive discussions of alternatives. The Global Right to Food Network can help understand and analyze the links between each of these areas and the ESCR and in particular the right to food. There is an increasing demand for work in this area, and the goal is to build capacity and to clarify the content of these rights.

#### **f. Other issues**

The above mentioned issues are certainly of high relevance for the struggle for the right to adequate food. However, during the consultation process, partners in the Network might come up with additional issues that should be tackled as priorities.

### **5. The role of FIAN**

Ever since its foundation, FIAN has promoted the accountability of duty bearers under the Right to adequate Food by using and further developing human rights instruments and institutions at the national and international level. Obligations of states under the right to adequate food were at the root of FIAN's case work on violations of this right, demanding that duty bearers meet international human rights obligations.

The FIAN International Council has decided to start the promotion and establishment of the Global Right to Food Network, considering FIAN's role as the initiator and process

facilitator. From the start, the initiative will build upon FIAN's role in existing networks generated over the last two decades to facilitate the right to food work at the Rome level, the discussion on land issues, adoption and ratification of the Optional Protocol, definition and implementation of ETOs and publication of the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch.

To a certain extent, FIAN is already a global right to food network. The main difference between FIAN and the Global Right to Food Network is that members of FIAN are individuals and national sections (FIAN being an organization and not a network) exclusively dedicated to the promotion of the right to adequate food, whereas members of the Global Right to Food Network will be national, regional and international civil society organizations, social movements and institutions that have included the right to food in their agenda but would not exclusively work in this area or on human rights only. FIAN is very conscious that many networks already exist and work in related fields. It is very important to avoid competition with and/or duplication of the work of our present and potential partners. The Network will not compete, or create the perception of competition with other CSOs or networks working in the field. FIAN has been cultivating a style of networking that has not been based on promoting its own profile as a protagonist, but as a facilitator that puts the common cause first. The Network should work with this very same spirit.

## **6. Objectives and timeline**

### **a. Overall Objective**

Create a Global Right to Food Network to strengthen worldwide efforts to end hunger and malnutrition by promoting better cooperation between partners **to scale-up right to food accountability** through increased civil society empowerment and participation, from the household to the global level.

### **b. Specific Objectives**

- i. The Global Right to Food Network will promote and strengthen worldwide civil society mobilization on Right to Food accountability. It will make visible the claims of the social groups and communities most affected by violations of the right to adequate food, and contribute to their empowerment as right holders.
- ii. At the global level, the Global Right to Food Network will strengthen civil society collaboration and participation in several highly relevant processes, such as the elaboration and implementation of the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition (GSFFSN) in particular by facilitating the inclusion of a right to food focus as well as a monitoring mechanism in the Framework; the elaboration, implementation and monitoring process of the Guidelines for Land and Natural Resources Tenure; the promotion and application of ETOs; the global campaign against land grabbing; the ratification campaign for the Option Protocol to the CESCRR; and the efforts towards a UN Convention on Peasants' Rights.
- iii. The Global Right to Food Network will broaden and promote worldwide right to food monitoring processes of relevant national and international policies. This will be achieved by increasing exchanges between, and capacities of, partners through the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch publication.

**c. Core activities and timeline**

2011: Strategic meeting involving representatives of all constituencies to articulate joint thematic priorities, political and operative principles, to define the process towards the launching of the network.

2012: Convene a global founding meeting of the network to establish a programmatic platform, a communication strategy and provisional governance structures and to launch a first worldwide mobilization campaign linked to the yearly publication of the Right to Food and Nutrition Watch.

2013: regional meetings

2014: First world conference of the Global Right to Food Network with the participation of over 50 national, regional and international civil society organizations from more than 100 countries: the first strategic plan will be defined and governing body elections will be held.

**7. Initial thoughts about terms of reference for membership and funding**

a. Basic rules:

- i. The Network respects the autonomy and independence of each member of the Network.
- ii. Network “modus operandi” completes and reinforces action on the members, without ever trying to replace it.  
The Network cannot expect to be the only network tackling issues related to the right to food. It should partner up with the other interested and pertinent networks

b. Criteria for membership: Network members are chosen on the basis of the criteria of independence, professionalism and credibility. To belong to the Network, an organisation must meet the following strict conditions:

- i. The CSO must be independent. Working for the policy and politics of a State or interest group is inadmissible:
- ii. Each CSO must be committed to the human rights approach and have as a agenda priority the promotion and defence of the human right to food.
- iii. The Network refuses CSO that
  1. Promote armed struggle or prompt hatred or violence in any way.
  2. Work for a government, an information service or a political party.

c. Funding:

- i. Each member pays an annual fee which, as a minimum, is equivalent to a (for example) 0,5 percent of its overall annual budget spent on right to food related issues.
- ii. In addition, project applications are submitted to public governmental and non-governmental donors.
- iii. Northern members will have to assume their travelling costs.