

## **Executive Summary**

Meeting of Farmers' Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held at the Bellagio Centre, Italy (Rockefeller Foundation), 26 to 28 May 2009

### **The meeting: context and conduct**

The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) convened a consultative meeting of 20 key civil society organizations in the spirit of moving towards eradicating hunger and in the context of FAO's *Reform with Growth* initiative. The 20 key civil society organizations (CSOs) participating in the meeting, representing a balance of regions and constituencies, included member-based regional and global networks of farmers' organizations (FOs), as well as international CSOs and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) working with marginalized groups such as smallholder farmers, artisanal fishers, indigenous peoples, women and youth. The Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), *Ms Maria del Carmen Squeff*, also attended.

The overall objective of the two-and a half-day meeting was to examine ways of *Building effective partnerships – systemic, systematic and corporate – between FAO and Civil Society to attain food security*. Aiming at conducting business “not as usual”, the Bellagio meeting was not intended to result in more commitments or declarations, but rather to establish a basis for a concrete, joint work plan. The accent was on highlighting opportunities for improved dialogue and closer, deeper collaboration. The meeting provided an occasion to identify and analyse past failures and successes in the context of FAO processes, look back at lessons learned, as well as make recommendations for the future.

Participants alternated between plenary and working group sessions to look at key issues including: the future state of food security and principal actors, the CFS reform and major objectives of the projected World Summit on Food Security to be held from 16 to 18 November 2009.

### **Conclusions**

Participants agreed that the meeting was a consultative one with no decisions to be taken by the participants or their respective organizations. It was, however, agreed that a new quality of engagement among civil society, governments and international agencies could galvanize public awareness and political pressure to devote the level of public resources, policies and activities necessary for the common goal of eradicating hunger. This could be accomplished by the following:

#### **1. Enhancing relations and a common platform between civil society and FAO**

This will require regular, continuous consultation and collaboration between FAO and civil society, within the context of the Committee on World Food Security, civil society participation at the World Summit on Food Security, and engagement in other FAO bodies, committees and technical meetings.

Continuity of the relationship between meetings is critical to maintaining momentum. One time events make it difficult to accomplish progress in FAO relations with civil society, and highlight the inadequate and inconsistent level of participation. It is critical to maintain existing relationships and dialogue with civil society, to ensure that they are included throughout the processes.

## **2. Full representation of the food insecure**

To effectively address the full range of food security issues and contribute to eradicating hunger, it is necessary for FAO to directly partner with those most affected. However, it was noted by the participants that representatives of some of the most vulnerable groups to food insecurity were not properly represented at the meeting including women, the landless, herders/pastoralists, urban poor, poor migrants and persons living with and affected by HIV/AIDS. This could compromise the integrity of the discussions and resulting recommendations.

## **3. Representation of farmers**

Farmers were fairly represented throughout the Bellagio meeting, including the two global federations, seven regional organizations and a national member of a food security network. While discussions at Bellagio focused on smallholders, there was debate on the inclusion of both medium size family farms and commercial farmers. Some recommended that farmers should be given privileged treatment distinct from other groups in civil society.

## **4. Major events in 2009**

Participants stressed that the events cited below needed to ensure that there was a major presence of those organizations constituted of and working closely with the vulnerable groups most affected by hunger. There was agreement that it was vital to address simultaneously the national, regional and global levels and ensure geographical and social balance.

### **Renewal of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)**

The participants were briefed by *Ms Squeff* on the process of revitalizing the Committee, which started in October 2008. Formulation of proposals for change is currently led by a Contact Group with three “pillars” of participation: by the member countries, International Organizations and NGOs/CSOs.

A CFS draft reform document currently in preparation describes the principal issues to be considered and options on how to address these issues. Four major areas are identified: 1) role and vision; ii) membership and decision taking; iii) mechanisms and procedures; and iv) the high-level panel of experts.

Revitalization will bring renewed relevance and importance to the Committee, with CSOs/NGOs/FOs fully engaged with other stakeholders in policy-making and implementation. Participants made suggestions regarding how they could organize within the new institutional framework of CFS in the light of options for civil society

participation. The participants of the Bellagio meeting proposed the following role and vision for a “new CFS”: *“The role of the CFS is to influence global, national and regional policies and programmed to eliminate hunger and achieve food security for all.”*

Further recommendations for a strong representation of civil society throughout the process of reform reiterated the importance of an institutionalized process. This would give these groups a guaranteed place to participate notably through an FAO-related Civil Society Forum which would include smallholder farmers, fishers, pastoralists and other marginalized groups.

### **Objectives of the World Summit on Food Security, 16 to 18 November 2009**

In order to galvanize the participation of civil society under tight time constraints, several proposals were made to ensure effective preparation and organization at the Summit. CSOs proposed that at least 500 CSOs/NGOs/FOs should be represented within the forum. It was agreed that:

- a **civil society steering committee** should be created, which would properly represent a diverse range of civil society actors and would liaise and work closely with FAO before and during the Summit;
- an independent **civil society forum** should run slightly before and parallel to the summit. The forum would also need to ensure representation of a full range of relevant CSOs including; farmers; fishers; indigenous peoples; agricultural and food workers; consumers; herders/pastoralists; forest users; the landless; urban poor; women; development, advocacy and other NGOs; media, information, training and education organizations;
- from the different groups attending the forum, **selected delegates** would attend the summit to represent the diversity, range and geographic distribution of civil society.