

Date: 5 February 2018

Time: 09:30-13:00

Location: Red Room, FAO HQ (Building A, 1st Floor)

Implementation of the CFS Evaluation - Recommendation 4

OUTCOMES

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the implementation of the response to recommendation 4 of the independent evaluation report, endorsed by CFS 44 as part of the consultation report, and to carry out the Plenary's decision to "*Review the composition and processes of the advisory group, so that it can perform its functions effectively*" (Action A4.1 of CFS 2017/44/12 Rev.1).

The co-facilitators reminded participants that the objective of this discussion is different from the Bureau's task to renew its advisory group (AG) by March 2018 for the remainder of the biennium, but the outcomes of this discussion could support the Bureau in its decision if Bureau Members decide so.

The co-facilitators stressed that the discussions should focus on implementation of the Plenary decision, based on the findings of the consultation report and high-lighted useful elements in its paragraph 24: the Bureau should clarify the support needed from the AG; active engagement is key; the five categories of constituencies remain relevant, and the principle of inclusiveness should drive composition; the Bureau should remain open to receiving advice from more stakeholders; flexibility is allowed through the appointment of ad hoc participants, depending on the topics discussed.

To structure the meeting, co-facilitators suggested to address Advisory Group process and function-related questions first, and composition-related matters in a second part. They presented guiding questions to steer the discussion.

1- Processes of the Advisory Group

The **reform document** which established the Bureau and Advisory Group as part of CFS mechanisms and structures outlines the function of the Advisory Group : "*to provide input to the Bureau regarding the range of tasks which the CFS Plenary has instructed it to perform. (...) It is expected that members of the Advisory Group should be able to contribute substantive work and provide advice to the Bureau*". (Reform, paragraph 32)

The CFS **Rules of procedure** further specifies:

Each member of the Advisory Group should be responsible for the establishment, maintenance and strengthening of regular linkages with organizations and entities within the category if represents with a view to:

- a) *Promote the engagement of interested organizations (...) in each of the 5 categories order to ensure a two-way exchange of information during CFS inter-sessional periods;*
- b) *Facilitate the participation and provision of inputs (...) regarding ongoing CFS activities (...)*
- c) *Assist the Bureau in the identification of important developments in the area of food security and nutrition at the global, regional and national levels and raise awareness towards the ongoing activities carried out by the different entities represented in each category;*
- d) *Contribute to the dissemination of CFS outcomes and deliberations.*

(CFS Rules of Procedure, Rule IV, para 3)

Guiding questions:

- How can processes be improved to ensure that the Advisory Group is effectively supporting the Bureau ?
- Do you have alternative process proposals which would enable the Advisory Group to better perform its functions?

Participants exchanged on how the advisory group could best “*contribute substantive work and provide advice*” (Reform document, paragraph 32) to the Bureau regarding the range of tasks it is expected to perform in the intersessional period.

Views converged on the following elements:

- The AG’s role is closely dependent on the role of Bureau. A prerequisite to discussions on how to improve the functioning of the AG is that the Bureau specifies in greater detail its role with regards to the intersessional work carried out in between Plenaries, the scope of its mandate to prepare Plenary (and how work is distributed with OEWGs), and what advice is needed.;
- Processes and timelines could be adjusted so Bureau can convey to AG what they want advice on. This can be done through agenda and specific guiding questions sent well in advance of a meeting (more than 2 weeks), or preparatory discussions between the Chair and the various AG participants;
- Processes could also be adjusted to improve the inclusiveness and representativeness of the AG. AG members that represent a constituency or organization should coordinate in advance to represent collective views; summaries of meeting discussions should reflect the balance of views expressed;
- Existing provisions for ad hoc participants provide sufficient flexibility to seek additional theme/agenda specific advice;
- Thematic policy discussions should continue to take place in the Open Ended Working Groups when these exist.

Further discussion, will be needed on:

- Whether the current process was a sound basis to build on with possible improvements, or whether it should be replaced by a new way of working and alternative arrangements;
- What sessions and activities during joint meetings could ensure the AG delivers on its functions, in particular: assist Bureau in identifying important developments; contribute to the dissemination of CFS decisions, without duplicating the work taking place in other CFS spaces (eg OEWGs and Plenary);
- The optimal frequency of joint meetings in the intersessional period (every second month vs twice a year);
- The number and nature of topics put on the agenda of joint meetings, with suggestions that “substantive FSN” items requiring technical inputs be prioritized for AG meetings. The agendas for Bureau meetings could – in contrast - progress procedural decisions which did not require thematic expertise. The follow-up discussion needs to be linked to implementation of rec. 1+2;
- Whether a clear distinction could be made between thematic, policy or strategic discussions requiring technical advice from the AG, and procedural/organizational discussions related to Plenary planning in the Bureau;

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- What “substantive advice” was needed from the AG, and whether this was best delivered in the form of one-way inputs, or an interactive two-way dialogue with the Bureau.

2- Composition of the Advisory Group

Guiding questions:

- Are there participant categories from the reform document that would add value to the work of the Bureau?
- Is there a need to change the number of seats? If so, why?
- Are there any proposals to be shared regarding current requests for new mechanisms or additional seats?

Adequacy of participants’ categories for the work of the Bureau

The five categories identified in the Reform document are relevant. The role of mechanisms was appreciated and some felt could be expanded to other categories and reiterated the invitation in paragraph 17 of the reform document. Among the categories participants felt the voice of farmers was essential. Given the diversity of famers there was a lack of clarity presently in how/where their voice was heard. The importance of facilitating the active engagement of non-Rome-based members through virtual participation was reiterated.

Number of seats in the Advisory Group

The maximum of 14 seats presently available, accompanied by the provision for ad hoc participation in general was considered sufficient for the Bureau to be able to appoint a suitable AG. They also stressed that efforts to improve the functioning of the advisory group should focus primarily on how to foster quality advice (with an emphasis on functions and processes of the Advisory Group rather than composition), and should be able to demonstrate flexibility when needed.

Suggestions were made to accommodate the concern that the full diversity of food producers was currently not represented in CFS:

- that farmers’ organizations (continue to) actively participate through CSM and PSM according to their individual size and preference;
- that the seat presently allocated to philanthropic organisations go to farmers’ organizations;
- that IFAD is an international financial institution and could represent the IFI category, making available a seat that could be allocated by the Bureau as desired (eg to farmers’ organizations);
- that those AG participants that have not demonstrated active engagement in the last biennium be offered ad hoc seats, while their seats be redistributed among active stakeholders.

While some requested parity of seats between PSM and CSM, others stated the importance of giving emphasis to the voices of the most vulnerable (as represented by CSM) through increased representation.

Participants agreed that this discussion, in the context of the implementation of the response to Recommendation 4, should focus on systemic issues and the strategic nature and functions of the Advisory Group. The distribution of seats among members of the Advisory Group is for decision by each new Bureau, every two years, when considering the appointment/renewal of its Advisory Group for duration of their

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mandate, according to its prerogative. The current Bureau may (or may not) therefore choose to consider the suggestions above, when it meets to decide on the renewal of its Advisory Group by the end of March 2018.

Alternative proposals

A joint proposal was presented by Iceland and Egypt suggesting changes in processes and composition of the AG. Participants expressed interest in considering the proposal, which has been subsequently circulated by the Secretariat.

Conclusion and next steps

Co-facilitators concluded the meeting by calling for written comments to follow-up on discussions as well as reactions on the proposal tabled by Iceland and Egypt.

Participants were also reminded of the deadline of 5 February to send comments on recommendations 1 & 2.

The co-facilitators announced that a Bureau retreat would be organized on 19 March 2018, consistent with the Bureau's guiding role in the implementation process. This informal brainstorming will focus around implementing specific responses to the evaluation, and allow a holistic discussion on how the response to the evaluation would lead to changes in CFS.

Annex:

Joint proposal by Iceland and Egypt
Recommendation 4

Rationale:

According to the CFS Reform Document: *"The function of the Advisory Group is to provide input to the Bureau regarding the range of tasks which the CFS Plenary has instructed it to perform. Decision making will be in the hands of the member States. It is expected that members of the Advisory Group should be able to contribute substantive work and provide advice to the CFS Bureau."*

The AG has not been able to effectively perform this function because of many constraints. The AG became a platform where stakeholders exchange views on practicalities instead of providing the needed substantial technical advice on Food Security and Nutrition matters.

Objective:

The AG should be a central place where relevant stakeholders share information, seek collaboration, identify problems in the real world and strategize about how the Committee can be helpful in problem-solving. The AG role is to assist the Bureau by sharing with it the expertise and knowledge of the broad range of organizations it represents and its outreach to constituencies.

The Proposal:

1. Establish an extended AG that meets for three regular sessions per year with Agenda set by the bureau with substantive questions on food Security and nutrition matters. The AG could meet additionally if requested by the bureau, and may suggest to add relevant items to its own Agenda meetings.
2. The Bureau will decide on the composition of the AG, taking into account, need for input and show of interest from different constituencies of CFS Participants and other relevant stakeholders and shall ensure the representation of the five categories of constituencies.
3. The Bureau will admit two observers with the right to speak (PSM and CSM because of their representation nature). The Bureau could also decide on additional *ad hoc* observers depending on the topics on the Agenda.

Implications:

This will clearly need for a plenary decision.