

## **Summary of FAO's Consolidated Comments on the High Level Panel Report on the Post 2015 Development Agenda**

FAO welcomes the draft High Level Panel Report and the boldness of the Universal vision it represents. It considers this **positive, compelling narrative** about the need for a transformative agenda to be a valuable contribution to the debate on a post-2015 development agenda. FAO appreciates **the scope of the perspective** on how to achieve sustainable development which is articulated in the report, as well as the focus on poverty eradication. The five transformative shifts capture very well the critical areas where international coordination is needed to bring about change. Transformative shift on building “peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all” should generate a particularly important and dramatically positive impact on food insecurity in many of the conflict and disaster-affected countries that are at the center of FAO's efforts.

Overall, FAO is also supportive of the **illustrative goals and targets**, which represent a significant improvement over the MDGs and constitute potentially important catalysts of transformative change at many levels. The Organization is reviewing these options carefully and has not yet articulated a single position.

While the roadmap is generally sound, there are some **important omissions and some partial, imbalanced or inaccurate portions and perspectives where adjustments and additions are needed** for the agenda to work. Greater emphasis is needed in the following areas:

### **1. Clarifying and strengthening the role of rural areas in delivering on sustainable development.**

The roles of rural constituencies and agriculture in setting a universal but differentiated agenda needs to be recognized and the report should articulate a more dynamic, forward-looking vision of rural areas in a global shift to sustainable development. Rural urban disparities and rural poverty specifically will need to be systematically tracked and capacities will need to be developed for rural data collection and analysis. Targets that can catalyze sustainable rural development need to be specified in the framework.

**2. A thorough analysis of the drivers of poverty reduction.** Several experts have highlighted the challenge of supporting rural communities' inclusion in local and global markets, hence first developing local markets, while at the same time ensuring that local farmers can feed their communities. “One produces for the local community because one cares about the well-being of that local community. “Caring” and “community” are crucial factors that should be given far more attention as key elements of any effective response to the hunger problem, local and globally” (George Kent). Do governments care enough for their communities, their people? These themes relate to decentralization, participation, and empowerment of civil society, emergence of community leaders, self-help, community driven institutions and programmes that strengthen communities own capacities to fight poverty by themselves, etc., all essential dimensions calling for radically new governance systems. The report would be strengthened by putting these dimensions in full light.

**3. Recognition of the full potential of small producers and family farming.** The report recognizes the role of agriculture – notably for food security. However, there is need for clearer and coherent recognition of the central role of small producers – the largest part of this sector, and mostly engaged in family farming - in providing for the food security and nutrition of entire societies, driving inclusive growth, and managing ecosystems. At present, the report implies that “large-scale” commercial agriculture is the solution to the world's increased demand for food (p. 40). FAO however believes that supporting the improvement of small holder and family farming is perhaps the most equitable way to develop the agricultural sector and, simultaneously, improve livelihoods, ensuring food security and reducing poverty. This does not mean that there is no place for

development of commercial agriculture, but that priority for public policies and financing should be on supporting development of the family farming sector.

**4. Recognition of the critical need for nutrition-sensitive agriculture.** FAO is pleased to see nutrition receiving significant attention alongside of hunger. However, the report would benefit from greater focus on the importance of agriculture in promoting nutrition for all, as nutrition-specific interventions can only tackle part of the current under-nutrition challenge, despite their importance. Agriculture contributes to better nutrition outcomes through diverse diets, fresh, safer and more affordable food, and greater dietary intake. Agriculture also contributes to nutrition outcomes indirectly through increased food availability, lower prices and access, impact of agricultural development on women's roles, control over resources, nutritional knowledge and time available to care for children, etc. Nutrition-sensitive investments in smallholder agriculture must therefore be one important part of the sustainable development agenda.

**5. The role of biodiversity for food and agriculture in contributing to planetary well being.** To produce food, appropriate genetic resources (e.g. seeds, livestock breeds, fish etc.) need to be available. These resources allow climate change adaptation and resilience of the systems and the planet. In many cases the use of appropriate crop varieties also strongly supports addressing malnutrition issues. All these elements have a clear influence on the sustainability of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries as a whole and the very survival of human kind, and the report would be strengthened by fully reflecting them.

**6. Articulate the interlinkages between conflict/violence and food security.** FAO welcomes the report's reinstatement of sound principles for action (social justice, humanity, respect, etc.) that will require leaders to adopt new mind-sets and change their behaviour. It also rightly highlights poverty factors (conflict, violence, poor governance, corruption), previously under-recognized, and stresses the importance of stronger institutions, as well as conflict resolution and mediation mechanisms in stable and peaceful societies to ensure legal empowerment of the poor. The inclusion of peace and good governance goals indeed points to a major shift from the MDGs and is a development that FAO strongly supports. The report points out that violence and conflict are a major source of poverty, however there is a similarly strong correlation between conflict/violence and food insecurity, and this should be explicitly articulated.

**7. A critical take on the relevance of some easy formulas or dogmas** such as "connect people in rural and urban areas to the modern economy" or "championing free and fair trade and technology innovation" is needed. Modernity is an ill-defined concept and often incorrectly used as a token for eradicating poverty. There is ample evidence that inequalities persist with market/technical development, and that access to markets and technology is not a panacea, may widen the rich-poor gap and further marginalize the poor, unless rights-based redistributive policies are put in place. Also, the advocacy for sustainable development seems somewhat weak and excessively grounded on technological solutions, while failing to evoke the basic human values that need to be put at work at all levels; caring for each other, caring for the needs of the poorest - including wealthy groups caring to reduce their levels of consumption, if not redistributing their wealth - and eliminating waste are most important conditions of a sustainable economy, if organized societies are to "end" poverty.

**8. A stronger emphasis on the principles of development effectiveness.** Although addressed sporadically, in order to truly mark a new development paradigm shift, the report could put more emphasis on the principles derived from genuine "aid / development effectiveness" such as country ownership, leadership, mutual accountability and capacity development. The difficult questions such as how the post-2015 vision will be implemented, what the roles and responsibilities will be and who will be accountable for results, and what a comprehensive capacity development approach might look like, need to be addressed.

**9. The need to focus attention on mountain areas, rivers and lakes.** FAO would like to voice its concern that this report never mentions mountain areas, even though these were included in the Rio+20 declaration, “The Future We Want” with three paragraphs. Studies and empirical evidence have shown that mountain people are extremely vulnerable to malnutrition, poverty and hunger, with about one third of chronically food insecure people living in mountain areas. We therefore urge the report to give greater attention to mountains, for instance by inserting the following paragraph after paragraph 2, p. 41: ‘Mountain regions, which are home to 12 per cent of the world’s population, are also in need of attention. Deforestation, land degradation, climate change, migration and droughts are hampering mountain agriculture and making mountain communities ever more vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition’. Similarly, the report makes no specific references to rivers, lakes (and dams), which is a grave omission. Lack of agreement on controversial issues like the impact of dams on fisheries and inland fishing communities means that this requires greater, not less attention in the post 2015 development agenda. .

**10. The importance of social protection and its linkages with other actions.** FAO welcomes the inclusion of social protection in several goals. The past experience of OECD countries and the current experience of emerging countries is that poverty reduction and societal progress at large go together with social protection, not for short emergency periods, but for extended periods of time that should last as long as the periods of economic growth. Yet social protection should be given greater prominence still. First, the report could be more ambitious and strive for a genuinely universal social protection mechanism to be reached in all countries in stages. Second, social protection systems should protect people not only from natural disasters but also from risks they might encounter across their lifetimes, including economic shocks. Finally, there is scope to better show the linkages and complementarities between social protection and other actions. For example, social protection will not only ensure poverty reduction, but will also have a positive effect on food security, nutritional status and, possibly, production capacity and access to education and health services.

**11. Rural areas need to be given specific focus and priority:** Achieving decent employment and livelihoods represents a major challenge for rural areas since unemployment, underemployment, poor remuneration, poor working conditions, and exposure to occupational hazards continue to prevail. Many of the “working poor” are indeed landless labourers, family workers on farms, as well as workers in off-farm rural activities. Globally, nearly eight out of ten of the working poor live in rural areas and spend a high proportion of their disposable income on food. Evidence also shows that there are limited opportunities for productive and decent employment for young people in the agricultural sector and in non-farm rural activities. As a result, many youth abandon agriculture and rural areas to migrate to urban centres, nationally or abroad. Worldwide, 60 percent of child labour is found in the agricultural sector with many children engaged in hazardous and risky work that can compromise their health, development and education. In view of all this, FAO urges that, from the disaggregation applied and the indicators chosen to measure the relevant targets, that rural areas are given specific focus and priority, and that urban/rural disaggregation, though implied, be explicitly mentioned.