



## 30<sup>th</sup> FAO REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR EUROPE

### CFS MULTI-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE

#### SHARING EXPERIENCES AND TAKING STOCK OF THE USE AND APPLICATION OF THE VGGT IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

Antalya, Turkey

3 May 2016, 15.00 – 17.00

Meeting Report

#### I. BACKGROUND

1. The Multistakeholder Dialogue of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) was organized back to back with the FAO Regional Conference for Europe. The objective was to enable an exchange among CFS stakeholders on the use and application of one of the products endorsed by CFS: the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security* (VGGT). The results will contribute to the global thematic event that will be held in October 2016 during CFS Plenary to take stock of the use and application of the Voluntary Guidelines.
2. The Voluntary Guidelines were endorsed by CFS in May 2012. They provide a reference and set out principles and internationally accepted standards for practices for the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests with the overarching goal of achieving food security for all and to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. They provide a framework that States can use when developing their own strategies, policies, legislation, programmes and activities. They allow governments, civil society, the private sector and citizens to judge whether their proposed actions and the actions of others constitute acceptable practices.
3. This regional multi-stakeholder dialogue also provided an opportunity to apply the draft *Terms of Reference (TORs) to share experiences and good practices in applying CFS decisions and recommendations through organizing events at national, regional and global levels*. These TORs have been developed by the CFS Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Monitoring and recommend an approach for sharing experiences and good practices at different levels, which is consistent with CFS principles of country ownership, inclusiveness, participation, coordination and transparency.
4. The multistakeholder dialogue combined short presentations with an open dialogue among participants facilitated by the CFS Secretariat. This dialogue was informed by the contributions of stakeholders that responded to a call for submissions on good practices in the use and application of the VGGT.

#### II. OBJECTIVES

5. The specific objectives of the meeting were:
- Promote the adoption of the good practices identified in implementing VGGT;
  - Monitor progress in implementing VGGT at national and regional levels;
  - Draw lessons to improve the relevance and effectiveness of CFS work; and
  - Increase awareness and understanding of VGGT.

### III. PARTICIPATION

6. The event was attended by 45 participants of which 19 representatives from countries, 25 from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) (including 3 from indigenous groups) and 1 from FAO. It was facilitated by the CFS Secretariat. The list of participants is provided in **Annex 1**.

### IV. AGENDA

7. The event was opened by the ADG of the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia. A keynote address was delivered by the Director General of the General Directorate of European Union and Foreign Relations, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock, Turkey. The event was divided in two parts. The first part concentrated on experiences in applying VGGT in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) with presentations from Germany, CSOs and Western Balkans. The second part focused on experiences in using VGGT in development cooperation, from a donor's perspective and a civil society's perspective. The agenda is provided in **Annex 2**.

### V. CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED FROM STAKEHOLDERS

8. Ten (10) contributions provided background information for the discussions during the multistakeholder dialogue on the use and application of the VGGT in the ECA region. An overview of the contributions is provided in **Annex 3**<sup>1</sup>. The overview also includes 5 contributions to the VGGT global thematic event of October 2016 that report on experiences in the region. A total of 15 contributions have therefore been received for the region.
9. Eleven (11) contributions document experiences in applying VGGT in the region (including 5 which refer to experiences at country level and 6 at regional level) and 4 relate to the application of VGGT in development cooperation.

**Table 1: Coverage of the contributions documenting VGGT experiences and good practices**

<b>1. VGGT applications in Europe and Central Asia</b>	
Country	5
Regional & multi-country	6
<b>2. VGGT applications in development cooperation</b>	
Regional & multi-country	1
Global	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>

10. Seven (7) contributions were received from multilateral or bilateral development partners, 6 from CSOs, 1 from government and 1 from the International Union of Notaries. Most of them focus exclusively on land issues (versus fisheries and forests).

<sup>1</sup> All contributions are posted at:

[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1516/OEWG\\_Monitoring/4th\\_Meeting/VGGT\\_Global\\_Thematic\\_Event\\_Compilation\\_\\_Submissions\\_7\\_Jun\\_2016.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1516/OEWG_Monitoring/4th_Meeting/VGGT_Global_Thematic_Event_Compilation__Submissions_7_Jun_2016.pdf)

11. The experiences have been classified in five categories according to the type of activities documented in the contributions<sup>2</sup>:

**Awareness raising:** activities focused on sensitizing stakeholders to VGGT; examples include holding of conferences, seminars and awareness raising events and preparation of case studies to document the existence of tenure-related problems.

**Capacity development:** activities aimed at increasing knowledge and skills in applying VGGT; examples include development and delivery of training targeted at different stakeholders: CSOs, government institutions and leaders of communities affected by tenure-related issues.

**Development of multi-stakeholder platforms:** activities aimed at establishing an institutionalized permanent platform where relevant actors join forces to achieve common tenure-related goals.

**Change in Legal and policy frameworks:** activities focused on mainstreaming VGGT into laws and policies; examples include organization of round tables, analysis of compliance of laws and policies with VGGT, preparation of position papers on laws and policies, advocacy, alignment of CFS stakeholders' policies on VGGT.

**VGGT Operationalization:** activities focus on promoting the practical use of VGGT, assisting communities in addressing tenure related constraints; e.g. pilot experiences to test implementation of new law/policy; mapping, conflict resolution initiatives and registration of land titles.

12. The distribution of the contributions across the categories are as follows: 11 of the 15 contributions had a focus on awareness raising, 9 on changing legal and policy frameworks, 6 on developing capacity, 3 on VGGT operationalization and 2 on developing multistakeholder platforms.

## VI. APPLICATION OF VGGT IN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

13. Presentation of Germany: "Gap analysis" comparing safeguards by Development Finance Institutions (DFI) with VGGT

Germany presented an analysis carried out by the German Institute for Human Rights to ensure that the standards/ safeguards used by the Development Financial Institutions (DFI) comply with the VGGT. The process provided substantial input to the World Bank safeguards review process and to the preparation of the "*Analytical Framework for Land-based Investments in the African Agriculture*". The main constraint was the initial resistance of DFI to question existing standards and procedures. The presenter also briefly introduced an experience related to the implementation of VGGT in Sierra Leone.

Factors associated with success were: political will at national and international level (G7 commitment); and the involvement of a credible and mandated third party to carry out the analysis.

The presenter informed participants that the Government agreed to hold a national conference with the participation of all stakeholders by the end of 2016 to monitor progress **on the use and application of VGGT in Germany**.

14. Integrated presentation of five experiences of Civil Society Organizations in the region

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<sup>2</sup> Most contributions fall into more than one category.

The presenters introduced five CSOs' experiences and the results in terms of increasing CSOs' understanding of VGGT and their use on land and natural resources in Europe; recognition of CSOs as a credible partner for dialogue; and actions leading to political changes. Main constraints were the assumption that VGGT were not relevant at "home" and should only be used in development cooperation, differences in interpretation of the VGGT by different actors, failure to conduct genuine consultation with CSOs and the fact that VGGT had not been translated in the different languages of the region.

The factors associated with success were identified to be: common understanding of CSOs of issues associated with land, fisheries and forests and determination of CSOs to work together; development of a training methodology for CSOs to use VGGT and action-oriented research; and interest of some governments in VGGT and openness to consider CSOs' needs and views.

15. Presentation of the contribution submitted by Macedonia on West Balkans: *Land and Gender in the Western Balkans – Understanding Customs and People's Lives*

The experience in West Balkans was successful in increasing female land ownership in six countries through generating gender disaggregated data from the administrative property registration systems and promoting its use for evidence-based advocacy. Although women and men have equal legal status in relation to property, local customs and cultural norms prevailed over laws. Main constraints consisted in lack of evidence of the unequal distribution of land between men and women to sensitize stakeholders.

Success was attributed to the production of gender disaggregated data, the involvement and development of capacity of key stakeholders (representatives of cadastre authorities, government policy-makers, national statistical authorities, notaries, ministries of justice, NGOs and IT experts) and sharing of experiences among countries.

16. A number of issues were raised by the participants during the follow up discussion including:

- Access to land for new comers to farming threatened by high prices. The influence of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on prices was raised, but discussion suggested there was a lack of evidence to demonstrate the relationship between the CAP and farmland prices.
- Civil society from several countries signalled land grabbing processes with land being bought at very low prices for speculation, leading to significant land concentration. Interventions questioned the use of the term "land grabbing" to designate large scale transactions.
- EU underlined the fact that much attention was given to land issues within EU institutions, with a vector of conditionality on tenure issues to support e.g. smallholders and young farmers, but clarified the fact that land issues were under the competency of countries, with VGGT being implemented on a voluntary basis, and encourages CSOs to lobby national parliaments.
- Netherlands stressed the fact that the Ministry of Trade was very active in promoting multistakeholder partnerships for the implementation of VGGT (and also of the Principles for Responsible Agriculture Investments endorsed by CFS in 2014 - RAI) and encouraged the adoption of a similar approach in other countries of the region.
- FAO confirmed the private sector's important role in implementing VGGT but recognized that it had been difficult to involve them in VGGT-related projects.

- Other issues included: lack of political will to comply with VGGT; importance of involving grassroots people in efforts to improve issues related to tenure governance; urgent need to protect urban and peri-urban agriculture; the fact that VGGT are mostly being used for addressing tenure issues related to land and not to fisheries while everyday communities lose coastal and inland fishing rights.

## **VII. APPLICATION OF VGGT IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

### **17. Donor's perspective (EU):**

Responsible governance of tenure has been a priority for EU since 2000, in particular for female and smallholder farmers, as part of the EU pro-poor sustainable agriculture development programme. EU started a special programme in 2013 to support the adoption of VGGT in 10 countries, programme which was extended to 18 countries in 2015 with almost EUR 60 million in the context of EU development assistance; 10 out of the 18 countries are in conflict or post-conflict situation.

The main constraints come from the fact that VGGT are implemented on a voluntary basis and national sovereignty applies to land issues; and limited budget allocations for dealing with land issues at country level. Good practices include cross-country capitalization meetings that provide a platform for peer learning and experience sharing and inclusive multistakeholder dialogue on land policy issues in countries.

### **18. Civil society's perspective:**

The presenters underlined the fact that EU's influence on land issues in countries goes much beyond specific VGGT-related activities (e.g. influence of EU biofuel and trade policies on land issues) and stressed the importance of establishing mechanisms within EU institutions to ensure the coherence of transversal policies on governance tenure.

The presenters said that development cooperation tended not to include CSOs and grassroots organizations and was therefore not inclusive. They also highlighted the fact that the majority of projects focused on land owners in areas with rich agriculture potential and to neglect poor areas.

19. Responding to this last statement, EU said that its support to VGGT had a focus on vulnerable groups. It recognized that it could play a more important role in echoing bottom-up processes and monitoring compliance with VGGT.

## **VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS TO CFS**

20. Main recommendations to CFS from the participants to improve the relevance and effectiveness of its work were the following:

- Focus on the populations most affected by hunger and malnutrition as they are the core business of CFS work and should be at the forefront of all CFS products in their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- Strengthen a two-tiers approach including a political dialogue with governments and other stakeholders, which demonstrates the benefits of VGGT for food security and nutrition, and strong linkages to the field to ensure that CFS work is based on the reality on the ground;
- Continue efforts to monitor and evaluate CFS products, beyond sharing "good practices".

## **IX. LESSONS LEARNED RELATED TO THE APPLICATION OF THE TORs FOR SHARING LESSONS AND GOOD PRACTICES**

21. The event enabled a useful dialogue among informed stakeholders on context-specific challenges and opportunities related to the use of VGGT in the region, adding significant value to the information provided in the written contributions, by unfolding the issues and constraints faced by different stakeholders.
22. More time given to stakeholders to contribute inputs to the event and more involvement from them in the design of the event might have resulted in more contributions documenting the application of CFS products in the countries and region, with richer results for both CFS and the region.
23. Taking advantage of an existing opportunity for this dialogue allowed sharing information at low cost but that approach also carried limitations in terms of inclusiveness and participation. Participants were a subset of the participants in the FAO Regional Conference for Europe and a number of relevant actors were not represented or were represented by participants with limited knowledge of VGGT application. Most importantly, not all countries involved in VGGT implementation were represented. Private sector, academia and financial institutions were not represented while UN agencies were only represented by one FAO staff who had not been directly involved in VGGT implementation. Based on this experience, taking stock and monitoring the implementation of CFS products (ensuring participation, inclusiveness and regional representation) by relying exclusively on events that have their own objectives and attendance, without a dedicated budget, could be really challenging.

## **X. CONCLUSIONS**

24. This multistakeholder dialogue allowed a quite extensive discussion on the application of the VGGT in the region and in development cooperation. The event offered a good opportunity to share ideas among stakeholders with limited resources but the approach also had negative implications for inclusiveness and participation. A number of important stakeholders were not represented or were represented by participants with limited knowledge of VGGT.
25. VGGT implementation in the ECA region has been rather limited in spite of the fact that several countries in the region have been actively involved in the negotiations leading to CFS endorsement of VGGT and are strong supporters of the VGGT. Based on the contributions received, VGGT use appears to have been mostly circumscribed to non-EU member countries, i.e. countries of Central Asia and Western Balkans.
26. The main reason seems to be the widespread view among governments, in particular among EU member countries, that the VGGT are not relevant to their countries. The government of Germany, which has made the commitment to monitor progress in implementing VGGT in Germany, is a notable exception.
27. The civil society has been active in trying to change this perception by raising awareness of tenure governance-related problems, developing capacity of CSOs and grassroots movements in using VGGT and other related tools, documenting case studies of poor tenure governance, and advocating for tenure governance issues. The civil society has also presented a petition to the EU: *"Preserving and managing European Farmland as our Common Wealth"* aiming at reviewing existing regulation on land.

28. Several good practices were highlighted such as the importance of involving neutral institutions to review the compliance of institutional policies with VGGT, of joining forces to achieve common objectives, of developing capacity of all main actors involved in VGGT application, and of producing evidence to sensitize stakeholders to tenure governance-related issues.
29. Issues of governance of tenure receive much attention within the EU institutions as part of EU sustainable agriculture development programme and massive support is provided under development assistance with resources specifically dedicated to VGGT promotion. Countries are however sovereign and VGGT are implemented on a voluntary basis.
30. The region is home to a number of development partners and many contributions to the VGGT global thematic event document the application of VGGT in the context of development cooperation.
31. Most applications of VGGT in the region exclusively focus on tenure of land while tenure of fisheries and forests also require urgent attention.

**Annex 1: List of participants**

30th ERC CFS Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Sharing Experiences and Taking Stock of the Use and Application of the VGGTs in Europe and Central Asia

Antalya, Turkey – 3 May 2016, 15.00 – 18.00

	Name	Country/Organization	Email
<b>Governments</b>			
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13.	Damien Kelly	Irish Embassy, Rome, Ireland	damien.kelly@dfa.ie

14.	Hinrich Thoelken	Permanent Representation, Germany	hinrich.thoelken@diplo.de
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<b>Civil Society Organizations</b>			
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## Annex 2: Agenda



30th ERC CFS Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Sharing Experiences and Taking Stock of the Use and Application of the VGGT in Europe and Central Asia

### 1. Experiences in applying VGGT in Europe and Central Asia

- (i) **Germany:** Presentation of the German contribution: *“Gap analysis” comparing safeguards by Development Finance Institutions (DFI) with VGGT*  
Dr Gerhard Stiens, Senior Officer, Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture
- (ii) **Civil Society:** Presentation of five integrated contributions from Civil Society Organizations:
  - Ms Sylvia Kay, Transnational Institute
  - Mr Daniel Cismas, Ecoruralis
    - Formation of regional CSO platform and development of a new agricultural code in Wallonia, Belgium
    - Research and official studies on how to use the VGGT to influence EU land governance frameworks
    - EU petition to adopt a human rights based approach to land tenure in the EU
    - Training and capacity-building workshops for CSOs on the VGGT in ECA
    - Analysis on the use and application of the VGGT in and by Germany
- (iii) **Western Balkans:** Presentation of the contribution submitted by Macedonia: *Land and Gender in the Western Balkans – Understanding Customs and People’s Lives*  
Ms Romyana Torchovska, FAO Senior Land Tenure Officer

Questions and Answers

### 2. Experiences in applying VGGT in development cooperation.

- (i) A donor’s perspective (EU)  
Ms Florence Buchholzer, Minister Counsellor, EU Delegation to the UN organizations
- (ii) A Civil Society’s perspective  
Ms Stéphane Parmentier, OXFAM Belgium  
Ms Elene Shatberashvili, Elkana, Georgia

Questions and Answers

**Annex 3: Contributions documenting experiences and good practices in the region**

	<sup>3</sup>	Geographic coverage	Title	Submitted by:	Timeframe	Submission reference number <sup>4</sup>	Topics covered
<b>Experiences and good practices in applying VGGT in Europe and Central Asia</b>							
1.	Y	Belgium /Wallonie	Les Directives comme outil de plaidoyer pour un accès à la terre plus juste et durable en Belgique	FIAN Belgium	From 2013	<b>S23</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> <li>• Legal and policy frameworks</li> </ul>
2.	Y	Germany	Advocacy for the VGGT in Germany	FIAN	From 2012	<b>S24</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> <li>• Legal and policy frameworks</li> </ul>
3.	Y	Italy	VGGT as a Tool for Improving Access to Land and the Responsible Management of Natural Resources: Based on the Experience of Lazio Region and Rome	FAO	2014-15	<b>S25</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal and policy frameworks</li> </ul>
4.	Y	Serbia	Serbia Real Estate Management Project	World Bank	2015-20	<b>S27</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> <li>• Capacity Development</li> <li>• Operationalization</li> </ul>
5.	Y	Tajikistan	Tajikistan Real Estate Registration Project	World Bank	2016-21	<b>S29</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity Development</li> <li>• Operationalization</li> </ul>
6.	N	Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Moldova and Tajikistan	Promoting secure land tenure within the framework of the Voluntary Guidelines (VGGT Caravan Project)	FAO	Oct. 2015- Jan 2016	<b>S39</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> <li>• Capacity development</li> <li>• Multistakeholder platforms</li> <li>• Legal and policy frameworks</li> </ul>
7.	Y	Western Balkans Region	Land and Gender in the Western Balkans. Understanding customs and people's lives.	Agency for real Estate Cadastre - Macedonia	2013-17	<b>S43</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> <li>• Capacity development</li> <li>• Multistakeholder platforms</li> <li>• Operationalization</li> </ul>
8.	N	Western Balkans	Participation of UINL in the VGGT application	International Union of Notaries	Completed	<b>S28</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> Y: means that the submission was already included in the package provided before the event; N: means that the submission was not included but was part of the submissions to the CFS Plenary Session in October 2016.

<sup>4</sup> The contributions can be found at:

[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1516/OEWG\\_Monitoring/4th\\_Meeting/VGGT\\_Global\\_Thematic\\_Event\\_Compilation\\_\\_Submissions\\_7\\_Jun\\_2016.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/cfs/Docs1516/OEWG_Monitoring/4th_Meeting/VGGT_Global_Thematic_Event_Compilation__Submissions_7_Jun_2016.pdf)

9.	Y	Europe	Using the Tenure Guidelines to tackle burning European land issues	TNI and European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)	From 2013	<b>S40</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> <li>• Legal and policy frameworks</li> </ul>
10.	Y	Europe	Preserving and managing European farmland as our common wealth" – Petition No. 0187/2015	European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)	Since 2014	<b>S41</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> <li>• Legal and policy frameworks</li> </ul>
11.	Y	Europe	European farmers' organizations advance towards VGGT implementation in the region	European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC)	2014-15	<b>S42</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> <li>• Capacity development</li> </ul>
<b>Experiences and good practices in applying VGGT in development cooperation</b>							
12.	N	Africa	EU programme "supporting responsible governance of land tenure by promoting the VGGT"	EU	2014-22	<b>S38</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity development</li> <li>• Legal and policy frameworks</li> </ul>
13.	N	Global	Application des VGGT dans les projets soutenus par l'aide au développement française : production et utilisation d'un guide d'analyse des projets d'investissement agricole à emprise foncière	Agence Française de Développement (AFD)	From 2014	<b>S51</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Legal and policy frameworks</li> </ul>
14.	Y	Global	"Gap analysis" comparing safeguards by Development Finance Institutions (DFI) with VGGT	German Institute for Human Rights on behalf of BMZ in cooperation with KfW Development Bank and DEG	2014-16	<b>S53</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> <li>• Legal and policy frameworks</li> </ul>
15.	N	Global	Panel on VGGTs at Academic Conference	TNI, FIAN	Feb. 2016	<b>S26</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising</li> </ul>