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CONFERENCE

Thirty-third Session

Rome, 19 November – 26 November 2005

REPORT OF INFORMAL MEETING OF OBSERVERS FROM INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (INGOs)

1. The Informal Meeting of Observers from International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) attending the 33rd Session of the FAO Conference was convened on Saturday, 19 November 2005. A list of participants is attached (Appendix). Following the usual practice, the report of the meeting is submitted for the attention of the Conference.
2. The Ad Hoc Group of INGO Representatives to FAO residing in Rome (AHG/INGOs) and the International NGO/CSO Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) prepared the meeting in consultation with FAO and selected the following items for the agenda:
 - FAO reform – A vision for the 21st century (C2005/INF/19)
 - International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (C 2005/6)
 - Progress Report on Implementing the Gender and Development Plan of Action (C 2005/7)
3. Two Co-Chairpersons were nominated. Mr Antonio Onorati (Crocevia), representing the IPC, and Mr Paolo Rozera (WOSM), representing the AHG/INGOs.
4. The proposed agenda was approved.
5. The likely implications for civil society of the proposed reforms of FAO were presented by Mr Thomas Price, Officer-In-Charge, Resources and Strategic Partnerships Unit (TCDS) and Ms Anna Rappazzo, Secretariat for the International Alliances Against Hunger (IAAH). They noted relevant points in the official document prepared for the conference, particularly underlining the responsibilities proposed for the new “Alliances and Rural Livelihoods Department”.

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The meeting expressed the wish that CSO/NGO consultative mechanisms be consulted as soon as the Conference made a decision on the subject. At that time, CSOs would provide their advice on the reform and its implementation.

6. Regarding the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, Mr Parviz Koochafkan, Director, Rural Development Division (SDA), gave an informative presentation about the conference, its contents and the process to involve CSOs/NGOs based in its preparation. The meeting expressed a high interest in the conference, in the preparation of which both IPC and AHG/INGOs have been consulted. The participants stressed that access to land and water, their control by peasants, farmers, Indigenous Peoples, pastoralists, fisherfolk and landless workers is a prerequisite for any strategy to fight hunger and poverty.

7. The meeting strongly supported the plan for a dialogue session on “equal footing” between Governments and CSOs during the ICARRD to give the opportunity to CSOs to fully express their own concerns, needs and views.

8. The meeting stressed the need to give full attention to the role and responsibilities of women, including :

- i. their rights to land ownership
- ii. their rights to free water supply for land and family use and at easy reach
- iii. support to rural women in terms of rural infrastructures to relieve family burdens
- iv. support to obtain micro-credit for income generating activities
- v. support and promotion for home/family economics education and training for both boys and girls

9. The meeting welcomed the initiative taken by the IPC to facilitate the organization in parallel of a Social Movement, CSO and NGO Forum in Porto Alegre entitled “*Tierra y Dignidad*”. The Forum will aim to provide inputs to the ICARRD through case studies based on the results of experiences and strategies conducted directly by civil society, grass roots and social organizations.

10. For the Progress Report on Implementing the Gender and Development Plan of Action (C 2005/7), Ms Marcella Villarreal, Director, Gender and Population Division (SDW), highlighted key points of the conference document and the Side Event scheduled for 21 November 2005. The meeting recognised the efforts made by the FAO Secretariat but noted that much more needs to be done by Member Governments in implementing policies and programs at country level to deeply modify the present unequal situation of rural women.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The meeting expressed strong concern about the continuous deterioration of living conditions in rural areas, both in the South and the North, and called on Member Governments to fulfill their responsibilities towards all peoples, including a mandatory respect of appropriate legislation. The participants to the meeting expressed the readiness to support Government policies aimed at reversing contemporary negative trends and called for planning through peoples’ participation and consultation with *food producer organizations* (farmers, peasants, Indigenous Peoples, fisherfolk, foodworkers, etc.).

Concern was also expressed about the limited resources (financial and human) available for agriculture and rural development and the low priority often given to them.