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Developments in *Fora* of Importance for the Mandate of FAO

Executive Summary

In keeping with established practice, the Council is informed of developments in other *fora* of importance for FAO's mandate:

- 1) Global Initiatives to Support Countries in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Monitoring: Recent Decisions of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) and the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs);
- 2) International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability: Strengthening the Science Policy Nexus (Rome, 19-21 November 2019);
- 3) The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) – Collaboration Among Rome-based Agencies and other UN Agencies;
- 4) Update on the Global Compact and UN Network on Migration;
- 5) Food Security and Agriculture under the G20 and the G7; and
- 6) Digital Technology Innovation.

Suggested action by the Council

The above topics are presented to the 161st Session of the Council for information only.

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I. Global Initiatives to Support Countries in SDG monitoring: Recent Decisions of the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) and the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDG) (Beirut, 25-28 March 2019)

1. The Ninth Meeting of the IAEG-SDGs was held in Beirut, Lebanon, from 25 to 28 March 2019. The IAEG-SDG approved the reclassification of Indicator 14.7.1 on the Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the last Tier III indicator under FAO custodianship. The Meeting also withdrew the proxy indicator proposed for monitoring the same target for Fish Catch certified by the Marine Stewardship Council. With this last decision, countries can now start reporting on all FAO-relevant SDGs indicators.

Progress in global reporting since 2016

2. While progress on methodological development has been relatively swift, progress on data reporting has been slower. In 2017, the average percentage of countries that provided data on FAO-relevant SDG indicators was 29%. In 2019, that percentage increased to 42%, mainly due to new data being released for recently upgraded indicators. This average figure, however, also masks the fact that for seven (one third) of the FAO-relevant SDG indicators, the average share of reporting countries is less than 15%. Data gaps are therefore still vast and progress insufficient to ensure that the majority of countries, especially developing countries, will be able to monitor all SDG indicators in the next few years. Significant increase in investments and capacity development efforts is crucial to support the production of quality statistics for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Global Initiatives to support countries in SDG monitoring

3. An important decision was taken at the 50th Session of the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) held in New York from 5 to 8 March 2019, endorsing the Dubai Declaration, which reaffirms the Cape Town Global Action Plan as the common framework for global data reporting and also calls for the establishment of an innovative global funding facility to support country capacity in SDG monitoring. This global funding mechanism will be guided by a select number of member countries of the UNSC, while the Secretariat's function will be housed in the World Bank to facilitate the mobilization of International Development Assistance (IDA) funding. The objective of this funding mechanism will be to help countries identify SDG-related data needs and set their priorities on activities that will have the highest investment impact.

4. FAO is closely following the establishment of this funding facility to ensure that countries' investment needs in food and agriculture statistics are adequately addressed. FAO is also adopting a new strategy for statistical capacity development to reflect the results of its recent global SDG Data Gap Assessment. An integrated programme of technical assistance, complementing the Cape Town Global Action Plan, has been established to propose tailor-made support to build countries' capacity to produce quality food and agriculture statistics in order to inform the necessary policies and investments for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Partial funding has already been secured and several resource mobilization activities are planned for the coming months to fill these funding gaps.

II. International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability: Strengthening the Science Policy Nexus (Rome, 19-21 November 2019)

5. At its 160th Session, the FAO Council endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the 33rd Session of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) regarding the organization of the *International Symposium on Fisheries Sustainability: Strengthening the Science Policy Nexus*. The Symposium, to be held at FAO headquarters from 19 to 21 November 2019 aims to address the following topics:

- a) the status of global and regional fisheries sustainability;
- b) the challenges to improve the sustainability of fish resources;
- c) what constitutes evidence and how to ensure evidence based decision-making; and
- d) what society expects from marine and inland fisheries in the 21st century.

6. In addition to a report on the outcomes of the Symposium to the 34th Session of COFI in 2020, it is expected that the conclusions arising from the Symposium will form the basis of a High-Level Declaration on the role, value and sustainability status of global and regional fisheries to be submitted to COFI in 2020 for endorsement, as part of the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. The objective of the Declaration would be to reinforce commitments to the Code and its associated instruments and articulate a new vision for fisheries sustainability in the 21st century.

III. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) – Collaboration among Rome-based Agencies and other UN Agencies

7. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are important technical collaborators and co-publishing partners of FAO's flagship publication *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)*. This report monitors progress towards globally agreed food security and nutrition targets and provides in-depth analyses on the drivers behind these trends to inform decision-making. Since 2017, the scope of the report has broadened to include both a focus on food security and nutrition, as well as to monitor implementation of SDG2 within the framework of the 2030 Agenda. With this broadened scope, FAO, together with IFAD and WFP, reached out to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), to bring them on-board to collaborate in preparing the report.

8. The SOFI report is currently one of the most important publications in the UN system and beyond when discussing Food Security and Nutrition as it not only monitors progress in implementation of the goals and targets on the road to achieving SDG2, but it also highlights the interconnectivity between SDG2 and other SDGs through its in-depth themed analysis.

9. The RBA Principals, together with UNICEF and WHO, will launch this year's 2019 SOFI report in New York on the side-lines of the High Level Political Forum (HLPF), under the auspices of ECOSOC, which will be held from 9 to 18 July 2019.

10. An analysis of the 2019 SOFI report is especially relevant for the 2019 HLPF theme "*Empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality*". In particular, the report will examine how economic slowdowns, poverty, inequality and marginalization are contributing to the rise in hunger and malnutrition. The report will also help inform HLPF discussions by providing information on the linkages between SDG2, SDG8 and SDG10.

IV. Update on the Global Compact and UN Network on Migration

11. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) was adopted in December 2018 at a High-Level Intergovernmental Conference held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 10 and 11 December 2018, which included over 150 governments and almost 400 partners, and was subsequently endorsed by the UN General Assembly. The need to address the adverse drivers of migration was a common plea of many governments for the implementation of the Compact. FAO supported the process in the lead-up to the GCM adoption process through its co-Chairpersonship of the Global Migration Group. During the plenary session FAO reiterated its commitment and the contribution that the Organization could make to supporting Member Countries to implement the Global Compact, emphasizing the rural dimensions of migration.

12. The final text of the Global Compact includes important entry points for FAO to support the Compact implementation such as: Objective 1 on data and evidence-based policies; Objective 2 on addressing the adverse drivers of migration (youth unemployment, poverty, climate change and environmental degradation); and Objective 21 on sustainable reintegration of returnees.

13. Implementation of the Global Compact is state led. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been encouraging Member States to identify their priorities in implementing GCM and to develop national plans if possible. There have already been requests from countries for work to be done on youth employment, climate change/environmental degradation, and sustainable reintegration of returnees.

14. The UN Network on Migration, which includes 38 UN Entities, was launched in December 2018 to provide coordinated UN system-wide support to Member States in the implementation of the Compact. FAO will be actively participating to ensure attention is given to rural areas and issues of food security. A Global Compact Fund (Multi-Partner Trust Fund) will be launched in June 2019 to support inter-agency country-level support to Governments to achieve the objectives of the Compact. The Network is also developing its work plan priorities and establishing its working groups and initial priorities are already starting to emerge at global and regional level.

15. The Global Forum on Migration and Development, which will take place in late November 2019 in Quito, Ecuador, will include a working group/Government Round-table on “Harnessing Migration for Rural Transformation and Development” in which FAO will participate.

16. In support of the Global Compact implementation, FAO has finalized the FAO Migration Framework (corporate framework) to ensure greater coordination in FAO’s work on migration at global, regional and country levels and strengthen coherence and synergies across the Organization. It outlines FAO’s vision and mission on migration as well as its comparative advantage. It further elaborates why FAO works in this area and what the Organization does along the migration cycle related to its core functions.

V. Food Security and Agriculture under the G20 and G7

17. Since 2011, FAO has continued to provide support to the G20 and G7 in the areas of food security and agriculture. The Organization provides technical inputs, evidence-based policy advice, thematic reports and proposals for concrete actions, and participates actively in meetings of the two groups.

18. Japan assumed the G20 Presidency in 2019 and has requested FAO to support the deliberations of the G20 Deputy Ministers of Agriculture. This work stream will lead to the G20 Agriculture Ministers Meeting, to be held from 11 to 12 May 2019 in Niigata, Japan, during which a Ministerial Declaration will be adopted. At the request of the G20 Presidency, FAO, together with the Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD), led the preparation of a technical report on sustainable, productive and resilient agro-food systems, covering: i) agricultural value chains; ii) human capital development in agriculture; and iii) the role of agriculture to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The objective of the report is to inform the deliberations among the G20 Members and it benefited from inputs from the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), IFAD and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will assume the G20 Presidency for 2020.

19. France has assumed the Presidency of the G7 for 2019. The French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs will hold a G7 Ministerial Meeting on Development and Education from 4 to 5 July 2019. Under this work stream, the Food Security Working Group will have a special focus on rural youth employment in the Sahel. At the request of the French G7 Presidency, a technical report entitled “*Promoting rural youth employment in the Sahel: A background note for the G7 Food Security Working Group*” has been jointly prepared by the RBAs. This report provides inputs for the deliberations of the G7 Food Security Working Group regarding challenges and opportunities for concrete action to promote rural youth employment in the Sahel countries. The G7 Summit will take place from 24 to 26 August 2019 in Biarritz, France. The United States of America will assume the G7 Presidency for 2020.

VI. Digital Technology Innovation

20. In FAO, innovation has been present since its inception, providing global public goods to support governments and smallholders through the creation and replication of solutions in an economically and sustainably manner. This work has of late been accelerated by the recent call of the Secretary General to include digital technologies to achieve the SDGs. FAO advocates the strategic deployment of digital technologies, under the understanding of the potential benefits of this type of tools, but also considering the potential risks in the adoption of these technologies. Even though frontier technologies (Artificial

Intelligence, Blockchain, Internet of the Things, etc.) present great benefits, our approach is to take advantage of existing technologies and systems adapting them to local needs.

21. We are carrying out a series of Minimum Value Products (MVP) that will help better understand the usefulness of digital (new) technologies and innovative approaches to sustainable development, some of these examples are as follows:

- Mobile solutions (apps) for smallholders and family farmers, making information and advisory services more accessible in rural areas, as well as supporting, warning, advising and anticipating the daily decisions concerning agricultural activities, markets, and food systems.
- Enabling robust ecosystem to innovate with partners throughout the food and agriculture supply and value chains. One example of supporting this nascent ecosystem can be seen in the use of open innovation challenges, such as the one FAO's IT Division launched in July 2018 to find the most promising, bold technological solutions to tackle the growing challenge of youth in Africa's food and agriculture sector.
- Using partnerships, actively seeking sustainable, demand-driven opportunities to optimize the resources that our partners bring to our work. FAO is partnering with private companies such as Google Earth Outreach, Telefónica de España, Rabobank, Unilever and others, to leverage the tools and resources of these companies to enhance the impact of our programmes.

22. At the same time, we are working on the evaluation of new technologies, understanding their value and how to adapt them to local realities. For example, FAO is considering Blockchain as a tool to build consensus in low-trust environments, with several potential use cases within FAO programs in the optimization of the food chain, traceability, compliance with rights and the possession, and the improvement of the financial transaction processes. Another example of our work is the testing of different ways to incorporate artificial intelligence (AI) into our programs. For example, we are promoting the use of AI to support the internal administrative process to accelerate clearance and document classification, and in the same area, we are using AI to identify plant pests through mobile AI algorithms.

23. Finally, the Organization is also designing an internal structure (Innovation Unit) to develop solutions capable of supporting governments and small holders to contribute to food security and nutrition, economic development and sustainable natural resource management, increasing effectiveness, competitiveness, and resilience to shocks or environmental sustainability. In achieving these results in the coming years, FAO will be ready to realize long-term objectives, including the exploitation of cutting-edge technologies and new business models to offer new sustainable solutions, increasing the effectiveness and impact of our daily work.