



# COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

## **Fiftieth Session**

***"Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition"***

**10-13 October 2022**

## **CFS CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT ON THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION**

**The Chairperson's Statement provides an update of the negotiations on the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of food security and Nutrition. The Report on the negotiations prepared by the Co-Chairs and an overview of the inclusive process for the preparation of the Guidelines are provided in annex.**

Rome, 29 August 2022

I hereby share a report on the negotiations of the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition kindly prepared by the Co-Chairs Tanja Grén and Tomás Duncan.

As Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), I deeply regret that no agreement was reached on 28 July on CFS's draft "Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition". Work on these Guidelines has been ongoing for more than two years, including six regional consultations, an

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e-Consultation, and three week-long negotiation sessions, which leveraged the full, inclusive and multi-stakeholder nature of CFS.

With negotiations now at a standstill, we shall reflect on the process we have carried so far with effort and commitment from all parts, and analyse the reasons why we have not reached an agreement on certain issues. At the same time, we must acknowledge -and value in all its extent- that we achieved consensus on many critical and transformative policy guidelines needed to foster women and girl's empowerment and gender equality in the context of food security, agriculture and food systems and nutrition.

It is now time to look ahead and deliver on our mission.

Women and girls' empowerment is simply too important to our collective efforts to end hunger and malnutrition through inclusive and sustainable agriculture and food systems. With agreement reached on so many important topics and issues during the lengthy negotiation process, it stands to reason that we can find the consensus points to move us forward toward a successful outcome.

Together with CFS members and our key stakeholders including civil society, private sector, UN agencies and others, I aim to find a way to re-start and conclude these negotiations; to enable CFS to fulfil its present mandate to develop these agreed Voluntary Guidelines.

As I already announced, immediately after the summer break I will carry on extensive bilateral consultations with Permanent Representatives and Ambassadors, CFS mechanisms and other Advisory Group ad-hoc members and observers, in order to delimit the common ground that would allow a meaningful agreement. I will then propose a way forward in view of the forthcoming CFS 50 plenary session. It is my hope that, after this period of consultations, we will find the path towards an agreement that is acceptable to all parties and, most importantly, serve to the empowerment of thousands of millions of women and girls' for their – and the world's - food security and nutrition.

## **Annex 1: Summary by the Co-Chairs on Negotiations on the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment in the Context of Food Security and Nutrition**

### **Background**

1. At the 46<sup>th</sup> Session of its Plenary in 2019, CFS adopted a strategic [Programme of Work for 2020–2023 \(MYPoW\)](#), including the agreement of developing Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's (and Girl's) Empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition. The MYPoW noted that this workstream would support the country-led implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a particular focus on SDG 2 (zero hunger) and SDG 5 (gender equality). Negotiated [‘Terms of Reference’ \(ToRs\)](#) for the workstream were formally approved by the 47<sup>th</sup> CFS Plenary on 9 February 2021.

### **Process**

2. Using a draft document developed by the CFS Secretariat with the input of the Technical Task Team as the basis of consultations, six regional consultations were organized - between September and November 2021 - along with an electronic consultation.

3. The resulting Zero Draft, circulated in December 2021, was developed based on the outcome of the consultations. The preparation of the Zero Draft would have benefitted from allocating more time for its drafting process after the regional consultations, as it could have contributed to a more concise and streamlined Zero Draft.

4. An open-ended working group (OEWG) meeting on the First Draft was held in February 2022 and a second OEWG in April 2022. The Draft for negotiations was circulated in mid-March as a basis for negotiations. The negotiation process started in May and continued in June and July 2022. New Co-Chairs' proposals were prepared during the process on the basis of comments received. Accommodating multiple and sometimes quite diverged requests was not easy.

5. During the process, the Draft became quite comprehensive. It contained 114 paragraphs and about 100 subparagraphs. The majority of paragraphs were agreed *ad referendum*. However, many paragraphs remained still pending. Accord was not reached on gender-related language where views and positions were quite diverged and opposite. Hence, it was not possible to reach a consensus on the last day of the negotiation process in July 2022.

6. The process itself has been important and the work has been relevant. Many critical issues regarding gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment have been discussed and mutual understanding amongst delegations and stakeholders increased. The lessons learned from the process so far, as well as the current draft, provide a good basis for further negotiations. However, more time is needed for discussion and making the draft more concise and even more concrete. While strong divergences remain on the interpretation of the ToRs and on the scope of the Guidelines on what relates to gender-sensitive issues, there is a wide consensus on issues of extraordinary relevance for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the context of Food Security and Nutrition (accounting for approx. 75% of the current draft).

### **Conclusions**

7. Co-Chairs appreciate the strong commitment of Delegations to the process. It shows the importance and relevance of the topic. In addition, the support of the members of the Technical Task Team and the CFS Secretariat is indispensable for the whole process.

8. The Co-chairs recommend the Bureau and the CFS Chairperson that during the CFS 50 plenary, an alternative be presented that would allow Member States to consider the further steps on this critical CFS agreement on the Voluntary Guidelines, building on the agreed language of consensual United Nations General Assembly resolutions as the basis for consensus.

**Annex 2: Overview of the inclusive process for the preparation and negotiation of the Guidelines**

February 2021	Terms of Reference approved by CFS Plenary
August 2021	Zero Draft released
September – November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Six regional consultations organized in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Near East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America</li> <li>- Global electronic consultation organized via FAO Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition</li> </ul>
January 2022	First draft released
March 2022	Draft for negotiations released
May-July 2022 - 4-6 May and 7-8 June - 27 June – 1 July - 25-28 July	Three negotiation sessions organized in virtual and hybrid formats