

## 43rd Session of the Conference

### Introduction to Item 23: Guidelines for the participation of the private sector as observers in FAO Governing Body sessions

The participation of the private sector as observers in sessions of the FAO Governing Bodies and Technical Committees is a long-standing item discussed by FAO Members in Rome.

The Committee on Constitutional and Legal Matters (CCLM)<sup>1</sup> and the Council<sup>2</sup> have discussed this item during several sessions.

The 171st Session of the Council:

*(49) ... noted the complexity of the subject and requested that a consensus should be reached on the general principles, including the feasibility and desirability of participation of the private sector observers in sessions of FAO Governing Bodies, prior to embarking on designing draft guidelines.*

*(50) In this regard, the Council requested a background document addressing questions, remarks and observations raised by Members, and requested the [Independent Chairperson of the Council] ICC to consult thereon.*

In preparation for the 171st Session of the Council, a first informal consultation was held on 29 September 2022. Members raised issues and questions about principles and purposes; forms of observer status; criteria and procedures for granting observer status; reporting and review; risk management; transparency, especially on reporting and publishing; and limitations on the number of permanent observers attending Governing Body meetings, including their rotation. The consultation was held in a positive and constructive spirit.

As a backdrop to the above discussions, FAO's commitment to strengthening strategic engagement with the private sector towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been reinforced through the adoption by Members of an updated FAO Strategy for Private Sector Engagement 2021-2025 (the Strategy).

The Independent Chairperson of the FAO Council (ICC), with technical support from FAO, has undertaken an analysis and further consultations which form the basis of the note which was circulated to Members on 30 May 2023. A next informal consultation is foreseen at the end of September 2023.

*Mr Hans Hoogeveen, Independent Chairperson of the Council*

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<sup>1</sup> At its 97th Session in 2013, 115th Session in 2022, and the 118th Session in 2023

<sup>2</sup> At its 148th Session in 2013, 150th Session in 2014, 154th Session in 2016, 165th Session in 2020, 170th and 171st Sessions in 2022 and 172nd Session in 2023