Web Annex 4:

The 2023 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit and Artificial intelligence and digital solutions for the transformation of agrifood systems

1. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit, held from 18 to 19 September 2023 in New York during the UN General Assembly, gathered world leaders to mark the mid-point from the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), review progress made and showcase national plans to accelerate implementation of the SDGs. One of the main outcomes of the Summit was the adoption by consensus of a negotiated political declaration, which was subsequently endorsed by the UN General Assembly. This political declaration reaffirmed Member States' continued and shared commitment to the 2030 Agenda by advancing concrete, integrated and targeted policies and actions to drive SDG transformation.

2. The declaration, *inter alia*, emphasized the endeavour of Member States to "take action to bridge the digital divides and spread the benefits of digitalization", including to those most vulnerable by: enhancing their digital infrastructure connectivity; building their capacities and access to technological innovations through stronger partnerships; and improving digital literacy. Following on that vision, the implementation of a Global Digital Compact, to which FAO will also align with, is expected to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

3. Building on this perspective, the SDG Summit also featured the launch of twelve selected High Impact Initiatives (HIIs), which aim to strengthen the UN development system's efforts and activities, in close partnership with governments and a wide array of key stakeholders to accelerate the SDGs.

4. All twelve HIIs focus on the crucial dimensions of SDG acceleration, which are summarized in six key transitions, integrative by nature, and positioned by the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) as investment pathways with multiplier effects across all the SDGs. These are meant to be used by UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in their work with national counterparts on the acceleration of pathways that are most relevant to their country context.

5. The six key transitions include: (1) food systems; (2) energy access and affordability; (3) digital connectivity; (4) education; (5) jobs and social protection; and (6) climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Over the last years, FAO's efforts have been particularly geared towards digital connectivity, by supporting countries to strengthen digital capabilities to transform agrifood systems.

6. FAO, in collaboration with international financial institutions, regional development banks and sister UN agencies, is leading the HII focused on Food Systems Transformation which was launched before the SDG Summit. This HII aims to showcase the contributions of the UN development system and mobilize support from partners for transformative action on the ground. This requires activating innovative means of implementation (e.g., finance, data, innovation) and solutions for targeted action, and building on the success of digital initiatives and tools of the Organization. An example of those is the award winning Digital Public Good (DPG), the Hand-in-Hand (HIH) Geospatial Platform (GP) that provides, through millions of data layers, advanced information, including food security indicators and agricultural statistics, for more targeted agriculture interventions. The new HiH GP digital capabilities, based on the FAO AgroInformatics platform, enable new insights on demand, to better assist countries, and deliver them tools for more evidence-based decision-making, accurate natural resource management, improved production and strengthened early warning systems, contributing to the SDGs.

7. Building on these overarching strategic UN entry points, the Innovation and Technology Lever, and acceleration of global trends, including the emergence of new and disruptive digital technologies, FAO and the UN development system are well aware of the unique potential that digital solutions offer. They can contribute to assisting immediate global needs by making concrete impact and driving change,

also in humanitarian contexts –, and to mid- and long-term goals such as building more resilient societies, economies and agrifood systems, and achieving the SDGs.

8. FAO recognizes that digitalization and the use of data and artificial intelligence (AI) in many sectors, particularly in agriculture, play an important role in supporting evidence-based policy, planning and implementation to not only improve efficiency and productivity, but to also reduce negative environmental impacts. It also recognizes the urgent need to establish a strong, ethical and responsible international framework to govern research and application of new technologies, and to minimize social, legal, financial, operational or reputational risks, at all levels.

9. FAO has been actively focusing its efforts on contributing to an "Open, Free and Safe Digital Future For All" – as outlined in the UN Secretary General's Our Common Agenda Policy Brief on a Global Digital Compact. It aims to capitalize on dialogue, networking and investment-pitching through the lens of addressing the current food crisis by using new, high-impact, sustainable digital solutions. FAO's active participation in international fora, beyond the SDG Summit, is geared towards adopting a coherent and unified response through common mechanisms and building on existing recommendations and policies, including the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation, the Digital Public Goods Alliance (DPGA), Personal Data Protection and Privacy Principles, the UN 10 principles for governing the ethical use of AI as well as the 2.0 Quintet of Change.

10. With a strong focus on agrifood systems transformation, FAO organized a number of events to promote this vision and actions, such as: "Digital in Action: agrifood systems transformation for SDGs achievement" at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Forum; "Digitalization for Resilience at UN Food Systems Stocktaking Moment: A step towards the Future of Agrifood Systems" at the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS); and "AI and Digital Tools for Climate Resilient Agrifood Systems" at the Science and Innovation Forum 2023. These events were open and inclusive platforms to bring together multistakeholder bodies, institutions and agencies working on different areas of digital cooperation to be leveraged at the global, regional and local levels, and to catalyse opportunities for furthering partnerships and better coordination of resources, to ultimately achieve the SDGs.