

**Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food**

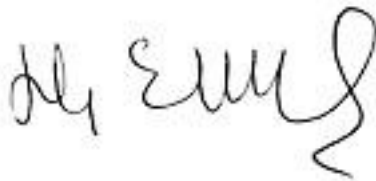
5 July 2019

Dear CFS Chair, Secretariat, stakeholders,

It is with pleasure that I am sharing this statement and comments below to contribute to the upcoming CFS Bureau and Advisory Group meeting on 22 July 2019. I am disappointed that my schedule does not allow for my attendance at this particular meeting, as the discussion on the proposed workstreams on “Reducing inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition” and “Data collection and analysis” are highly relevant to the mandate, and my upcoming thematic report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the right to food, which I will present to this forum at CFS46 and to the UN General Assembly in late October.

For your consideration, I have attached two reports published by OHCHR that informed my thematic report on SDGs, and specifically, my position on data collection and analysis, which is reflected in my comments below. These comments are intended to build upon my previous submissions to the CFS and earlier statements made during CFS Bureau and Advisory Group and OEWG meetings. As always, please let me know if there is a need for further explanation and/or clarification.

Sincerely,



Hilal Elver  
Special Rapporteur on the right to food

## **1. Proposed Workstream on “Reducing inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition”**

I reiterate my support for the resurgence and strengthening of the workstream on inequality, which is vital to supporting food and nutrition security. Inequality, and specifically, the inequitable distribution of food and productive resources, remains one of the most significant barriers to the right to food. Populations that are vital to global food systems but who face precarious situations, such as women, children, Indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, rural and peasant communities, small-scale farmers and fishers, migrants and refugees, tend to experience heightened inequality and discrimination. Other more neglected and highly critical forms of exclusion such as against IDPs, and disabled individuals for instance, would also be captured by this workstream and help achieve a more comprehensive view on the state of inequality worldwide and accelerate progress towards SDG10. These marginalized groups are not only among the world’s poorest, but face political, social, economic and cultural exclusion. It is against this backdrop that I provide the following input:

- a) The proposal appropriately recognizes that the workstream is highly complementary to all other workstreams, including, but not limited to, the workstreams on gender equality and youth;
- b) However, greater clarity on the scope of the workstream is necessary. The proposed focus on “inequalities between actors within the agri-food system” should extend to all members of society, including those who are **informally engaged in the agricultural sector**: inequality creates and exacerbates problems of socio-economic inaccessibility and undermines efforts to inclusive and just growth in this sector;
- c) The workstream should focus both on the extreme poor as well as the wealth gap within and between countries. Tackling inequality requires measures that empower populations experiencing or at risk of poverty, while simultaneously ensuring that a disproportionate amount of wealth does not accumulate in the top earning brackets to the detriment of the lower and middle income populations. Inclusive growth is necessary to reduce the inequality gap. Therefore, economic policies should be revised accordingly. The workstream should consider the impacts of social protection schemes as well as progressive fiscal policies that have a redistributive impact. These policies should also align with the 2030 Agenda goals.

## **2. Proposed Workstream on “Data collection and analysis”**

I welcome the discussion on data collection and analysis, as it indicates a commitment by the CFS to not just set an ambitious agenda, but to monitor global progress in achieving its goals. I further welcome multi-sector efforts to produce accurate and timely data to fill knowledge and information gaps necessary to implement food and nutrition policies consistent with SDG 2 and the right to food. However, for the reasons discussed below, **I encourage the CFS to integrate data**

**collection and analysis as a tool to be applied across all workstreams, but I find that it is not appropriate as a stand-alone workstream within the CFS policy convergence process.**

- a) The proposed workstream does include the principles necessary for a human rights-based approach to data collection. OHCHR has formulated a preliminary set of principles, recommendations, and good practices for policymakers, statisticians or data principles to follow when collecting data in order to ensure the respect, protection, and fulfilment of human rights. (*See attached* “A Human Rights-Based Approach to Data”). These include participation, self-identification, transparency, privacy, accountability, and data disaggregation. **The proposed workstream is silent on all of these principles.** For example:
- i. With respect to participation, it is necessary to involve all groups of interest in *all* stages of data collection and analysis, not just after the data are produced. **The proposal does not call for genuine consultation with stakeholders throughout the data collection process or provide for an inclusive, participatory approach.** This exclusion may be particularly dangerous for the most vulnerable and marginalized communities as statistical invisibility may result in further discrimination and neglect in policies and programmes.
  - ii. An important aspect of data collection is understanding what information cannot or should not be collected. This includes information, which, if released publicly or misused, would cause harm to an individual. **The proposal does not establish parameters or limitations on information that should not be collected; it does not address anonymity, self-identification, or rights to privacy and provide appropriate safeguards.** Data collection should not reinforce inequality, discrimination, bias or stereotypes and those reporting should have an opportunity to control how the information collected is used. Who will be accountable if the information is misused? Consider the ongoing legal debate in the United States over the inclusion of a citizenship question in the official government census. The data collected from this inquiry will not be used to reinforce human rights protections.
  - iii. The proposal does not mention disaggregated data that would allow for comparison between groups. **Collecting and analysing disaggregated data is central to a human rights-based approach to data and is consistent with States human rights obligations** (*See attached:* “International human rights standards and recommendations relevant to the disaggregation of SDG indicators”). The UN Statistical Commission responsible for developing the measurement framework for the Sustainable Development Goals has stipulated that all data collected to measure progress under the goals should be disaggregated by “income, sex, age, race, ethnicity migratory status, disability, and geographic location.” **Disaggregated gender analysis has proven to be vital in times of conflict and emergency when women are**

**more vulnerable to hunger, malnutrition, and gender-based violence.**

- b) Evidence-based decision-making has the potential to foster more objective, comprehensive and effective policies. Unfortunately, it can also have a distancing effect from the real stories and real people who are struggling to realize their right to food. When developing targeted strategies for **Indigenous peoples, extreme poor and isolated rural communities, personal interviews and ethnographic field research provide critical insight that hard data cannot always capture. The proposed workstream on data collection and analysis does not discuss this “soft evidence.”**
- c) As the revised workstream on inequality recognizes notes, collecting data is essential for identifying drivers of inequality and understanding their disproportionate impacts. **Adopting a separate workstream on data collection and analysis will create an unnecessary and misleading divide between the tool and its application. I recommend that the proposed data collection and analysis effort be integrated into the workstream on inequality or referenced throughout the adopted workstreams.**