

166th Session of the Council

Report of the 47th Session Committee on World Food Security (8-11 Feb 2021)

The 47th Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS 47) was held virtually from 8 to 11 February 2021 due to the ongoing pandemic.

The agenda of the Session was developed by the CFS Bureau, in consultation with its Advisory Group, and the Final Report of the 47th Session of the CFS is submitted to the Council for endorsement in document C 2021/20.

Over 3 000 participants participated in the 4-day event, including the main Sessions and its 12 side events. The Sessions were attended by representatives from 107 Members and 7 non-Members of the Committee, along with 14 Ministers and 5 Vice-Ministers. Since the CFS 46 Session, our membership drive has resulted in twelve new CFS Members – the largest such increase at one time since the 2009 Reform.

CFS 47 began with an address by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, delivered by his Special Envoy for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, Dr Agnes Kalibata. The Secretary-General called for “fundamental, systemic change to address hunger, sustainability and malnutrition, while upholding human rights, alleviating poverty and supporting inclusive and sustainable development for all.” He recalled that CFS “is our unique platform for multi-stakeholder engagement on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, bringing together governments, civil society, private sector, scientists, finance institutions, United Nations experts and others” and reminded participants that CFS “is an important example of inclusivity that I hope can be emulated at the national level.”

In my own remarks, I recalled the extent to which “COVID-19 has highlighted current food systems’ fragility,” and underlined the need to build “far more resilient systems that offer access to affordable and nutritious food that nurtures people and sustains our planet.” I stressed the importance of the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit as an opportunity to build momentum in this regard, and pledged the full support of CFS.

During the Session, the Committee welcomed the latest report from the CFS High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (CFS HLPE) entitled *Food security and nutrition: building a global narrative towards 2030*, and expressed appreciation for its vision and its conceptual framework connecting food and agricultural systems to health, environmental, economic, social and other systems. The Committee further acknowledged the report’s emphasis on two new proposed dimensions of food security - “agency” and “sustainability” - as crucial to achieving global food security and nutrition, grounded in the right to adequate food.

CFS Members and stakeholders generally welcomed the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit, recognizing the relevance of this 15th CFS HLPE report for the preparation of the Summit, and proposed that its organizers fully utilize all major CFS policy convergence instruments to ground the Summit’s preparatory work.

As the main item on the agenda of the 47th Session, the Committee adopted the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition (CFS VGFSyN). These Guidelines represent a concrete tool to inform policy-makers and others on practical policies and interventions to address malnutrition in all its forms through a holistic ‘food systems’ approach.

The Committee commended those countries that have voluntarily pledged to utilize the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition in their own national policy, and encouraged other countries to take similar steps to utilize this CFS product as a tool for national-level, coherent, and multi-stakeholder

action to promote sustainable food systems and address malnutrition in all its forms, and other related social, economic and environmental issues.

The Committee underlined the valuable input the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition will provide to the UN Food Systems Summit, both in the preparation and follow-up, and requested the Governing Bodies of FAO, WFP and IFAD to support their utilization at country level. A session on uptake and implementation of the VGFSyN will be held at CFS 49 in October 2021.

During the Session, the Committee also organized an event to take stock of the use and application of the CFS Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises (the Framework), adopted by CFS in 2015.

The Committee reiterated that the overall objective of the Framework is to improve the food security and nutrition of populations affected by, or at risk of, protracted crises in a way that addresses underlying causes, thus contributing to the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security.

The Committee also expressed the need for adapting the Framework, as appropriate, in the context of protracted crises, and the need for adequate financing for building resilience and capacities to achieve food security and nutrition in protracted crises.

The Committee recognized that the Framework, unfortunately, has been underutilized, with minimal, coordinated effort to ensure its dissemination and application, and requested to make additional efforts to promote a broader and more systematic dissemination, use and application of the Framework, as a tool for addressing food security and nutrition concerns in protracted crises.

With regard to its work on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment, the Committee endorsed Terms of Reference for the preparation of Voluntary Guidelines, which will be presented for endorsement by the CFS plenary in October 2022.

In undertaking this policy convergence process, the Committee underscored that gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment is essential to achieving all SDGs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as ensuring food systems that are economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. In the view of the Members, these Guidelines aim to foster greater policy coherence among gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, and food security and nutrition agendas, and promote mutually reinforcing policy measures.

The Committee also reviewed and updated its Multi-Year Programme of Work (MYPoW) for 2020-2023, which includes thematic workstreams on (i) Food systems and nutrition; (ii) Agroecological and other innovative approaches; (iii) Gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition; (iv) Promoting youth engagement and employment in agriculture and food systems; (v) Data collection and analysis tools; and (vi) Reducing inequalities for food security and nutrition.

Further, the Committee requested the three Rome-based Agencies (RBA), including FAO, to honour their agreement to share equally the costs of the CFS Secretariat budget, through either cash or in-kind contributions, as a symbol of joint ownership and shared commitment to the Committee via effective RBA collaboration.

In view of the huge challenge posed by the global pandemic for achieving Zero Hunger by 2030, the Committee commended the CFS Chairperson, Bureau and its Advisory Group, the CFS HLPE Steering Committee, and the Secretariat for their work to promptly address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on global food security and nutrition, and requested continued deliberation on, and due attention to, the impacts of COVID-19 on food systems, agriculture and nutrition at all stages of the implementation of the approved MYPoW's workstreams.

With regard to its upcoming Sessions, the Committee recommended that its 48th Special Session, for the anticipated adoption of the CFS policy recommendations on Agroecological and other innovative approaches, be held on 4 June 2021, and its 49th Session be held on 11 to 15 October 2021.

Finally, the Committee adopted the report of CFS 47 by consensus. The above summarizes some of the main outcomes of the Session, which are contained in document C 2021/20 and on the recently refreshed CFS public website.

Mr Thanawat Tiensin, Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)