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Organización de las  
Naciones Unidas para la  
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منظمة  
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# CONFERENCE

**Forty-fourth Session**

**Rome, 28 June - 4 July 2025**

**Report of the Eighth Informal Regional Conference for North America  
(Ottawa, Canada, 9-10 April 2024)**

**Report of the Eighth Informal North America  
Regional Conference of the FAO  
(INARC)  
Hybrid Meeting, 09-10 April 2024  
Virtual Pre-INARC Dialogues, 26 March-05 April 2024**



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**Report of the Eighth Informal North America Regional Conference of the FAO  
(INARC)  
Hybrid Meeting, 09-10 April 2024  
Virtual Pre-INARC Dialogues, 26 March-05 April 2024**

**Summary of North America Region core messages**

The North America Region:

- Welcomes open and productive **dialogue with FAO management** to help deliver on the shared objectives of the Organization as enshrined in the FAO mandate and the Basic Texts.
- Expects FAO to continue to **strengthen its governance** systems as a **Member-led organization**, taking concrete steps to implement relevant third-party recommendations (such as those made by the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit) on issues including human resources, oversight, and budgeting.
- Stresses the critical importance of the FAO's delivery of **data, analytical, and standard-setting work**, including through its flagship reports, and looks forward to those products, along with the data systems and other resources underpinning them, continuing to help guide agri-food system stakeholders.
- Emphasizes the importance of FAO's ambitious agenda on issues of agri-food **trade transparency, climate and biodiversity action** through agri-food systems, and **addressing gender and other food-system inequalities**, using the full suite of the tools at its disposal, from policy development and advice, to technical assistance, to programming, **within its mandate**.
- Underscores that investments in agri-food **science and innovation**—which include social and technical innovations, traditional and new—are essential for transformation to sustainable food systems, and calls on the FAO to continue to increase its support to member states in this regard, including providing impartial, science-based technical guidance and support for genome editing and other biotechnology tools.
- Emphasizes the importance of delivering, and communicating about, **concrete results** on the ground, across the range of engagements FAO has, from delivering evidence-based emergency agricultural assistance, to supporting data and statistics, to providing sectoral technical assistance, and supporting the broader UN system, continuing to build FAO's leadership based on its technical capacity and networks.

**Introduction**

1. Global food systems are under increasing stress: the FAO reports that the estimated number of undernourished people around the world has risen by more than 25% since 2017; the effects of climate change are increasingly impacting the resilience of food systems; global food production through to 2032 is forecast to increase at its slowest rate in decades; new barriers to trade and shocks to supply chains are constraining access to food and increasing producers' costs; and, while more than a third of working women around the world work in agri-food systems, women are nevertheless more likely to face food insecurity and less likely to have access to land and financing.

2. In the face of these and many other challenges and constraints, the Member States of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) North America Region—Canada and the United States—agree: the world needs more of the type of work and results that the FAO delivers.

3. The North America Region held the eighth Informal North America Regional Conference (INARC) on April 9-10, 2024, in Ottawa, Canada, in hybrid modality, to discuss the Region’s strategic priorities and guidance for the Organization’s work and governance. This is the written report of that meeting, which is intended to, with the other regional conferences, inform the work and governance of the FAO, offering value for the Organization and for all Member States.

## **I. Welcome and Opening Remarks**

### **A. Welcome: opening remarks by Canada, USA, and FAO**

4. In the opening session of the INARC, officials from the North America Region and the FAO discussed overarching North American priorities for FAO. It was noted that the INARC is an excellent biennial opportunity to exchange views on the important role of the FAO in not only responding to current food crises, but also projecting forward on what the world needs long-term from the FAO. Canada emphasized the importance of addressing climate change, and underscored that improving gender equality in agri-food systems and reducing food loss and waste also remain top priorities. The United States further called for FAO to be a responsive, Member-led, best-in-class organization, and emphasized the need for the FAO Council to return to being a consensus-based body. The North America Region highlighted that effective FAO governance is a key priority, and that FAO should take every opportunity to further strengthen the Organization and reinforce its credibility to deliver its mandate. Speaking to FAO’s technical work, the North America Region stressed the critical role of international trade in mitigating supply shocks; the continued need to support agri-food system transformation, including by optimizing land and water use; and that science and innovation must continue to guide FAO’s work. FAO officials mentioned some difficulties with collecting agricultural data from some Member States but noted ongoing work to fill in gaps. FAO also pointed to increased domestic agricultural production as part of onshoring protection from supply chain shocks, but with the caveat that it must be environmentally sustainable.

### **B. Greeting from FAO Director-General (virtual participation)**

5. FAO Director-General (DG) QU Dongyu praised the North America Region’s long-term contributions to FAO, highlighting the 2023 increase in FAO’s assessed budget, and progress made since the last INARC. He emphasized that peace is a prerequisite for food security, and affirmed a global right-to-food for all. DG QU noted governance and transparency as top concerns and welcomed the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) recommendations and upcoming Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) review to ensure FAO is fit for purpose and accountable to its Members. DG QU laid out that his first four-year term was focused on establishing structures including the Office of Innovation, Office of the Chief Scientist, and Office of Youth and Women, while his second term will be focused on ensuring more robust technical expertise in FAO’s field offices and better fit-for-purpose connections between headquarters and country offices. DG QU noted FAO’s first-ever global working meeting of FAO country representatives and the planned follow-up. The DG emphasized the need for science and innovation, including the Vision for Adapted Crops and Soils (VACS) initiative, and conventional and non-conventional breeding techniques, inclusive of genome editing, while also highlighting FAO’s work to preserve traditional and Indigenous knowledge and food diversity.

## **II. Reports from Pre-INARC meetings**

### **A. Readout of Pre-INARC dialogues**

6. To complement the INARC agenda, the North America Region convened six virtual pre-INARC dialogues with FAO officials, in the lead-up to the INARC. These meetings provided an opportunity for in-depth discussion on selected technical and policy issues, helping to inform discussions at the INARC and additional work going forward. Key insights from each dialogue were shared at the INARC and are reflected below in the order in which the dialogues occurred.

#### ***International Plant Protection Convention***

7. Dr. Osama El-Lissy, Secretary of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), presented virtually on the IPPC's goals, work, and future plans. He highlighted that losses of crop production due to plant pests and disease amount to 20-40% globally, and up to 60% in Africa. The IPPC's work to develop standards for plant health and build developing countries' capacities are essential for agri-food trade, and for food security. North American delegates expressed strong support for the IPPC and Dr. El-Lissy's leadership. They noted that FAO funding to the IPPC may not be adequate for the IPPC to deliver on its core mandate, and constrains the IPPC from pursuing other projects, such as an app for farmers across Africa to identify plant pests and diseases.

#### ***Codex Alimentarius***

8. Dr. Corinna Hawkes, the acting Secretary for the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and Dr. Sarah Cahill, met virtually with delegates from the North America Region. North American delegates stated that they saw Codex Alimentarius (Codex), like the IPPC, as instrumental to meeting the FAO's core mandate and securing results for all countries. The discussion noted that, without new funding, the work of Codex will be constrained. Delegates stressed how science is fundamental to Codex's success, and that Codex must remain successful at its core mandate and not seek to expand into new work beyond its scope and expertise that may be best addressed by other bodies.

#### ***Fisheries and aquaculture***

9. The North America Region and FAO Assistant Director-General Dr. Manuel Barange discussed alignments between FAO's Blue Transformation Strategy and North America Region regional and national priorities. The North America Region and FAO supported raising the profile of aquatic food contributions to global food and nutrition security through sustainable aquaculture, strengthened fisheries management, and upgraded value chains, while stressing the need to support science and innovation through improved fisheries stock assessments, a better understanding of climate impacts on fisheries and aquaculture, and aquaculture feed innovations. The North America Region noted that most of the growth in production in the coming years will come from aquaculture, but underscored that work to strengthen management of capture fisheries, including combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, remained essential and should not be de-emphasized. The group reached broad agreement on the importance of the Committee on Fisheries (COFI) and its sub-bodies as the global forum for advancing these issues, stressing the importance of robust technical discussions within these forums, and expressed optimism for the new Subcommittee on Fisheries Management.

#### ***Governance topics***

10. The North America Region appreciated the presentation from the FAO Office of Inspector General (OIG). The Region views the OIG as playing a pivotal role in advising the Director-General and the Council on risks and ensuring the effectiveness of FAO management's internal controls. Current efforts

focussed on strengthening oversight functions, including in Ethics, and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), were noted. The North America region urged FAO to accelerate progress in the coming year, and to look to the UN Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) reports as opportunities to reinforce FAO's credibility.

11. The North America Region welcomed a briefing by the Independent Chairperson of the Council (ICC) on his plan for future Councils. The North America Region welcomed the ICC's efforts to lay out a framework for restoring consensus-based decision-making in the Council and ensuring respect for the Basic Texts. The North America Region reiterated the importance of adhering to the Basic Texts and not past precedents, as well as the role various Secretariat positions and the ICC need to play, in order to guide the Council through difficult conversations. The Region looks forward to seeing a simplified plan with concrete working methods to guide Members in advance of the next Council.

### ***SDG 2 Roadmap***

12. The North America Region convened a pre-INARC meeting to discuss FAO's "Achieving SDG 2 without breaching the 1.5°C threshold: A global roadmap". David Laborde, Director of FAO's Agrifood Economics Division, highlighted that the Roadmap does not prescribe a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather offers a catalogue of actions that Member States and other stakeholders can take to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2 by 2030, while adapting to and mitigating climate change. The North America Region encouraged FAO to collaborate with the Region on the development of the next chapter of the Roadmap, and as it works with Member States to assess their deployment of the actions, causes of gaps in implementation, and lessons learned. The North America Region also encouraged FAO to better coordinate internally on the topic areas touched on by the Roadmap, and to leverage existing resources for Roadmap implementation.

### ***FAO follow-up to Seventh INARC (2022)***

13. The FAO reaffirmed the importance of the biennial opportunity presented by the INARC to consider high-level priorities through a candid, open dialogue among Canada, the United States, and the FAO. The North America Region noted that transparency and responsiveness to Members was at the core of the FAO report on follow-up to the 2022 INARC. The Region commended steps taken on each key INARC priority from 2022: 1) The war on Ukraine and its impact on global food security; 2) Governance; 3) Climate Change and Resilience, 4) Science and Innovation, and 5) Agricultural Trade. It was noted that priorities for the Eighth INARC (2024) remained largely the same, indicating consistency and sustained focus, and underscoring that FAO should continue to devote attention and resources, according to its mandate, to these topics. The North America Region expects that FAO will continue to undertake timely analysis of, and assistance to mitigate, the impacts of ongoing conflicts on global food security, including the impacts of Russia's illegal full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

## **B. Readout of FAOLOW consultations with non-state actors**

14. With the aim of including a range of stakeholder perspectives in the conversation, the North America Region asked that the FAO Liaison Office for North America (FAOLOW) undertake and report to the INARC on a set of consultations with North American non-state actors involved in FAO's work. Therefore, in the days before the INARC, the FAOLOW hosted three virtual consultations—with civil society, academia, and the private sector, respectively—convening 40-50 representatives from the targeted sector, with applicable FAO representatives, at each roundtable.

15. The civil society session focused on FAO work in emergency contexts, and highlighted the “multiplier” impact of emergency agricultural interventions, in partnership with local civil society organizations, in ensuring access to food for the greatest number of people at the lowest cost.

16. The academia session was the first-ever consultation of this nature by the FAO, and was an important first step toward enhancing links between FAO and the key source of technical and scientific insight into food systems that is the North American academic community, including Indigenous researchers and practitioners.

17. The private sector session acknowledged the growing openness at FAO to working with the private sector, and the critical importance of the private sector—which includes farmers—being involved, in discussions on and efforts toward alleviating global food insecurity.

18. In all of the consultations, non-state actors signalled their interest in increasing collaboration and engagement with FAO, noting that it can be challenging for any but the biggest or best-resourced to participate, and welcoming initiatives to facilitate broader non-state actor involvement. FAOLOW emphasized that the roundtables represented the beginning of greater and more-regular interaction between FAO and North American stakeholders. At the INARC, the North America Region thanked the FAOLOW for organizing and reporting on these consultations, and expressed an interest in further, more-detailed discussions of non-state actors’ views.

### **III. Plenary discussions**

#### **A. Climate, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability**

19. FAO presented on their new global roadmap to “Achieving SDG 2 without breaching the 1.5 °C threshold” (Roadmap) and on their work on climate change and biodiversity.

20. The North America Region reaffirmed the importance of FAO’s work on climate change, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability, recalling FAO’s Framework for Action on Biodiversity for Food and Agriculture and the FAO Strategy on Climate Change (2022-2031), and supporting their ongoing implementation. The North America Region underscored the need to sustainably feed a growing global population, and urged FAO to continue its work to ensure agriculture is a part of the solution in the fight against the ‘triple planetary crisis’ of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss.

21. The North America Region stressed that agro-ecosystems and agri-food actors are integral to the achievement of many targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), and urged FAO to identify more explicit biodiversity actions in follow-up to the Roadmap, and to continue to integrate biodiversity outcomes across sectors. There was shared understanding that this work needs to be further integrated across FAO divisions, with an emphasis on coherence across technical and analytical units of the Organization, to ensure solid underpinnings of all FAO’s climate-related guiding documents.

22. The North America Region noted that a significant proportion of FAO offices are working to support Member States in climate action, including in developing or updating their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The North America Region expects to see the proportion of support to these issues continue to grow over the biennium, and encourages the FAO to reinforce this increasingly important technical role, assisting Member States’ access to climate finance for agriculture (e.g., Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF)). The North America



Region and the FAO agreed to regular engagement in the lead up to the three Rio Convention Conferences of the Parties (COPs) in 2024<sup>1</sup>, and beyond, to share regional insights and expertise.

23. The North America Region also commended the release of FAO’s new report titled “The unjust climate: Measuring the impacts of climate change on rural poor, women, and youth,” and requested that FAO continue taking an intersectional approach to climate action.

## **B. Trade and supply chains**

24. The North America Region discussed the importance of agri-food trade for strengthening countries’ food security, providing economic opportunities for rural populations, and diversifying supply chains for resilience in the face of conflict, shipping disruptions, poor harvests, or other shocks. Of note, the North America Region remains concerned about the impacts to global food security, especially food supplies in developing countries, resulting from the ongoing Russian war of aggression on Ukraine.

25. Emphasizing that agricultural trade contributes to global food security and nutrition by increasing the availability and affordability of sufficient quantities of nutritious food, while mitigating the effects of external shocks and local disruptions to food production, the North America Region requested that FAO continue to publish timely information on import and export restrictions and encourage countries to refrain from imposing unnecessary barriers. The Region encouraged FAO to strengthen the role and visibility of the Committee on Commodity Problems by including more related topics and offices within FAO, with the ultimate goal of supporting policies that reduce market distortions and enable the innovation needed to promote more sustainable food systems.

26. The North America Region noted the benefits of science-based standards used in agricultural trade to strengthen food safety, fight pests and diseases, increase efficiencies, allow markets to adapt to shocks and distortions, and combat food loss and waste. The North America Region encouraged FAO to increase support for Codex and the IPPC in the next Programme of Work and Budget. The Region stressed the need for the FAO and its Members to support the core missions of Codex and the IPPC, focusing on the independence and the science-based risk analysis and decision-making of the standard-setting organizations.

27. The North America Region also highlighted the importance of the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS) platform in enhancing food market transparency and policy response, and encouraged FAO to continue supporting AMIS.

## **C. FAO Governance**

28. The North America Region focused its closed session on governance to three key topics: i) the JIU Management and Administration Review (MAR) of the FAO; ii) the plan of the Independent Chairperson of the Council (ICC) regarding future work of the FAO Council; and iii) the FAO budget process and Member engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> The 16th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is scheduled for October 21 to November 1, 2024. The 29th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will be held in November 2024. The 16th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) will take place in December 2024.

*i) the JIU MAR of the FAO*

29. The North America Region welcomed the JIU report as an important positive opportunity for FAO to continue strengthening its systems, in line with the broader UN system and in support of efforts to be “best in class.” The Region noted that the JIU report is one of a series of useful assessment tools, alongside the 2023 JIU’s “Review of the use of non-staff personnel and related contractual modalities in the United Nations system organizations,” and the upcoming MOPAN assessment report, and recommended that the Secretariat consider them in conjunction with each other.<sup>2</sup> The North America Region looks forward to the Management Response to the JIU report, including its consideration of both formal and informal recommendations, as well as reflections on the recommendations that require prior Council decision, to help inform the Council’s deliberations.

30. The North America Region underscored the importance of Member engagement, both through Council and its three committees, in the process of implementing the JIU recommendations as appropriate.

31. Noting that immediate focus from the North America Region will be on recommendations regarding the Programme of Work and Budget, and human resources and staffing, the North America Region welcomes the identification of different implementation scenarios for those recommendations for which multiple options exist for achieving the ultimate objective of the recommendation.

32. Further, the North America Region asks that a process for tracking implementation of the recommendations and reporting back to the Council on the results be established to help Members support management in delivering on the objectives of the review.

*ii) the plan of the Independent Chairperson of the Council (ICC) regarding future work of the FAO Council*

33. The North America Region recalled the primacy of the FAO Basic Texts as the principal guide for the proceedings of governing bodies, rather than past precedents, and emphasized that all have a duty to ensure respect of the Basic Texts and preserve their integrity.

34. The North America Region recognized the distinct roles of the Members, the Secretariat, the ICC, and other stakeholders, emphasizing the importance for a well-functioning Council of constructive engagement of, and trust among all actors. The North America Region stressed the importance of a Council that is civil and effective, and that seeks to guide the Organization within its mandate. The Region underscores the need to focus Council decisions and report language strictly on FAO’s mandate. The Region supports consensus-based decision-making in Council but recognizes that votes are sometimes required. When this is the case, voting procedures must be clear and efficient, and allow both time for debate and the opportunity for Members to offer amendments if desired, consistent with the FAO Basic Texts.

35. The North America Region also encourages the ICC to exercise his leadership and take ownership of process and decisions, recalling Resolution No. 9/2009 of C36: “The Independent Chairperson of the Council shall, under the framework established by the Constitution and the General Rules of the Organization regarding the status and functions of the office, and without restricting in any manner the

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<sup>2</sup> JIU/REP/2023/8: [https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu\\_rep\\_2023\\_8\\_english\\_0.pdf](https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_rep_2023_8_english_0.pdf)

general nature of those functions: (a) whenever necessary, take such steps as may be required to facilitate and achieve consensus among Member Nations, especially on important or controversial issues.”

*iii) the FAO budget process and member engagement*

36. The North America Region, taking stock of the previous FAO Programme of Work and Budget (PWB) exercise and looking ahead, called on the FAO leadership and Secretariat to adopt a more transparent, consultative, and inclusive process, with sufficient time for Members to engage with the Secretariat at the early stages of budget preparation. The North America Region underscores the importance of FAO remaining Member-led and Member-responsive when identifying budget priorities with clear connections between budget allocations and the decisions made in Conference and Council. The Region looks forward to increased Secretariat engagement with Members in the preparation of the next PWB, as early as the autumn of 2024 ahead of the Finance Committee meeting.

37. The North America Region suggests that the Secretariat explore best practices in the UN system for budget planning, and welcomes increased clarity regarding the right moment and platform to discuss budget levels and budget allocation, in the form of a written budgetary roadmap or similar document, complementing the guidance of the Basic Texts. To further facilitate smooth decision making, the North America Region recommends the presentation of multiple discrete budget scenarios for the next PWB, recognizing that management may identify a preferred scenario.

38. Finally, the North America region looks forward to the inclusion in the next PWB of budget and staffing tables, as recommended by the JIU MAR.

#### **D. Innovation and science**

39. Concurring with the FAO statement that “innovation is contagious”, the North America Region expressed vigorous support for FAO’s work on science and innovation. The Region agreed that successfully facing the global challenges in agriculture, fisheries, and forestry will only be possible with the increased adoption of innovative practices and science. This approach encompasses the gamut of options, from traditional practices to social innovations, to emerging biotechnologies and new developments such as the use of information technology.

40. The North America Region noted that science and innovation play a key role in overcoming many of the challenges to sustainably producing enough nutritious food for the world, and expressed strong support for the FAO to do more to share and amplify impartial, science-based guidance, including on biotechnology and genome editing. The Region stressed that these tools have enormous potential for all countries’ efforts to sustainably intensify food production and reduce negative environmental impacts. The Region recommended that FAO promote policies, develop technical guidance, and strengthen capacity-building efforts in support of innovative agricultural technologies for transforming food systems and improving global food security.

41. FAO officials spoke to the wide array of new initiatives the Organization is pursuing in innovation and science, including launching the Global Network of Digital Agriculture Innovation Hubs; innovation challenges with external partners; a new vision for the farmer field schools later in 2024; and other activities.

42. The North America Region noted and appreciated the FAO's new work in this space. Further, the Region called on the FAO to provide more data, technical analysis, policy guidance, and capacity building for developing countries, to help them create and adapt innovative practices, and benefit from science-based solutions. The Region also noted that the position of Chief Scientist remains vacant, and encouraged the FAO to fill the role with a highly qualified candidate, as quickly as possible.

43. When asked what obstacles hindered the adoption of innovative practices, FAO officials spoke to the need for funding to invest at scale. Co-creating and collaborating with external partners, regions, and FAO country offices was highlighted as a successful FAO approach to introducing and gaining uptake of innovative practices or products, in context-specific ways.

#### **E. The FAO's work on the ground**

44. The North America Region appreciated that FAO's mandate is complex and multi-faceted and spans developing and maintaining global norms and standards, generating knowledge, providing technical advice and capacity support, and delivering emergency agricultural assistance in protracted crises. The North America Region commended the important role that the Organization plays in supporting sustainable and inclusive agricultural development, and noted that the USA and Canada are both among the top five bilateral donors supporting FAO's annual USD \$2 billion portfolio, to forward that agenda.

45. The North America Region recognized that FAO has a unique capacity at country level to support coordination and collaboration with host governments, relevant public sector agricultural entities, and humanitarian actors working in the agriculture space. The Region noted the importance of the UN Resident Coordinator system and encouraged FAO to continue taking leadership on the ground, as appropriate.

46. The North America Region discussed the importance of ensuring coherence of policy advice across countries, and making strong linkages between the innovations, tools, and models developed at headquarters-level and their use on the ground, in support of quality assurance. FAO reaffirmed its commitment to continue developing tools that are relevant, with the end user in mind, while working with country teams to fill any knowledge gaps with further guidance.

47. The North America Region expressed its support for FAO decentralization efforts and commended the emphasis that FAO DG QU placed on strengthening in-country capacity during his opening remarks to the INARC. The North America Region looks forward to seeing FAO management and external evaluations continue to measure and assess the effectiveness of decentralization.

#### **F. FAO work in emergency contexts**

48. Continuing the discussion of FAO work on the ground to focus specifically on emergency contexts, FAO emphasized that only four percent of global humanitarian funding is allocated to emergency agricultural interventions, despite their longer-term benefits and proven impact. FAO explained that its work in fragile and humanitarian settings is intended to 1) help people anticipate and prepare for crises; 2) respond rapidly to crises, reducing needs and building resilience; and 3) reduce risks and address vulnerabilities. FAO stressed that in emergency situations, anticipatory action is important due to critical timing considerations, such as narrow planting seasons.

49. The North America Region expressed its strong support for FAO's work on the ground, including its emergency agricultural interventions, and recognized the critical role of this work in building resilience and mitigating the future need for humanitarian assistance. The Region also welcomes and supports FAO's spirit of innovation in advancing agricultural interventions in support of broader country-level development objectives.

50. The North America Region encouraged FAO to continue to foster strategic partnerships based on its comparative advantages, with the other Rome-based Agencies of the United Nations, and with experienced actors in the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus (HDP Nexus), to strengthen the resilience of acutely-food-insecure populations.

### **G. Gender and youth in agri-food systems around the world**

51. The North America Region expressed continuing appreciation and support for the work done by FAO and its Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP) on gender, youth and inclusivity. The Region commended FAO for the high quality of its gender-related reporting, citing the report on The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems, and the Unjust Climate report, which is the first attempt to quantify the impact of climate change on the rural poor, women, and youth.

52. The North America Region encouraged FAO to strengthen the collection of sex-disaggregated data to enhance understanding of the challenges faced by women in agri-food systems and to close the gender gap. FAO noted this request and informed the North America Region of its plan to publish a report next year on the Status of Youth in Agrifood Systems.

53. While supporting the concept of an Office of Youth and Women (OYW), the North America Region expressed concern that this office could duplicate ESP efforts and divert its resources. FAO responded that ESP will continue to play a technical role, while OYW will be tasked with mainstreaming gender and youth issues within the Organization, with the ultimate objective of better integrating women and youth within FAO to create the next generation of staff. This will be important to ensure that more senior-level positions are filled by women. It was explained that the OYW will also be instrumental in the World Food Forum.

54. The North America Region welcomed the FAO technical support to the US-led proposal for the United Nations to declare 2026 to be the International Year of the Woman Farmer (IYWF) and assurances that FAO will be pleased to facilitate its implementation.

55. The North America Region noted the forthcoming LGBTQIA+ strategy to be released by the UN Secretary General and welcomed FAO's commitment to implement it.

## **IV. Closing remarks**

56. The INARC ended with agreement within the North America Region on positions on the topics discussed, including ideas for advancing key interests strategically over the rest of the current FAO biennium. Closing remarks were offered by Canada, the USA, and the FAO, each noting highlights from the two-day meeting. The INARC was characterized as a testament to the collective North America Region and FAO resolve to advance global food security, emphasizing that food security is national security, for everyone. Appreciation was expressed for recent FAO work on and attention to the importance of inclusivity in food systems, and for new FAO efforts in promoting agricultural innovation

and science. Speakers reiterated the vital necessity of open, transparent, and science-based agri-food trade regimes, to improve resilience and food security, particularly for the most vulnerable. Finally, the FAO thanked the North America Region for their interest in and commitment to FAO's work; noted that FAO has enhanced the breadth and depth of their work in recent years in many areas including better collaboration with the North America Region and stronger cross-thematic analysis to integrate linked issues like biodiversity, climate change, gender equality, and trade; and conveyed willingness to work more closely with the North America Region, moving forward.

## Appendix: INARC Agenda

# ***Informal North American Regional Conference (INARC) 2024***

April 03, 2024

### ***Theme of INARC 2024: Building resilience and sustainable productivity growth for global food security***

The 2024 edition of the INARC will discuss with FAO several aspects of agri-food systems, and ways in which building resilience and sustainable productivity growth can contribute to the goal of food systems that are accessible, equitable, innovative, and sustainable.

### **Day 1 – April 09, 2024** All times Eastern Daylight Time Zone

<b><i>Time</i></b>	<b><i>Item</i></b>	<b><i>Notes</i></b>
09:00 – 09:20	Welcome: opening remarks by both Canada and USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Canadian remarks to be delivered by Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Stefanie Beck, and Peter MacDougall, Assistant Deputy Minister from Global Affairs Canada. US remarks to be delivered (virtually) by United States Department of Agriculture Under Secretary Alexis Taylor.</li><li>• FAO Deputy Director-General Beth Bechdol to attend in person</li></ul>
09:20 – 09:40	Greeting from FAO Director General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FAO DG to deliver opening remarks (virtual participation)</li><li>• Canadian and US representatives respond</li></ul>
09:40 – 10:25	Readout of pre- INARC dialogues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Summary of considerations from the pre-INARC dialogues</li><li>• Discussion</li></ul>
10:25 – 10:40	Health Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Light snacks and soft beverages</li></ul>
10:40 – 11:00	Readout of FAOLOW consultations with non-state actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FAOLOW Director Jocelyn Brown Hall shares insights and comments from North American non-state actors on FAO, Canadian and US work with the Organization, and international agri-food considerations</li></ul>
11:00 – 12:15	<b>Discussion # 1:</b> Climate, biodiversity, and environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Short opening remarks from Canadian and US representatives</li><li>• FAO: David Laborde and Kaveh Zahedi</li><li>• Discussion</li></ul>

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Notes</b>
12:15 – 13:30	Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lunch will be served on site for participants</li> </ul>
13:30 – 14:45	<b>Discussion # 2:</b> Trade and supply chains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Short opening remarks from Canadian and US representatives</li> <li>● FAO: Monika Tothova and Andrea Cattaneo</li> <li>● Discussion</li> </ul>
14:45 – 17:00	<b>Closed discussion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Canada and US representatives only</li> <li>● FAO governance, including Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) report</li> <li>● FAO &amp; major, global shocks to food systems <i>(discussion continues until close of Day 1)</i></li> </ul>

**Day 2 – April 10, 2024** All times Eastern Daylight Time Zone

<b>Time</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Notes</b>
09:00 – 09:15	Welcome, opening of the second day	
09:15 – 10:30	<b>Discussion # 3:</b> Innovation and science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Short opening remarks from Canadian and US representatives</li> <li>● FAO: Vincent Martin, Beth Crawford</li> <li>● Discussion</li> </ul>
10:30 – 10:45	Health Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Light snacks and soft beverages</li> </ul>
10:45 – 12:00	<b>Discussion # 4:</b> The FAO's work on the ground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Short opening remarks from Canadian and US representatives</li> <li>● FAO: Beth Bechdol, Rein Paulsen, Vincent Martin</li> <li>● Discussion</li> </ul>
12:00 – 13:15	Lunchtime session: <b>FAO work in emergency contexts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lunch will be served on site</li> <li>● FAO: Rein Paulsen</li> <li>● Discussion</li> </ul>
13:15 – 14:30	<b>Discussion # 5:</b> Gender and youth in agri-food systems around the world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Short opening remarks from Canadian and US representatives</li> <li>● FAO: Lauren Phillips, Nicholas Sitko</li> <li>● Discussion</li> </ul>



<i>Time</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Notes</i>
14:30 – 14:45	Health Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light snacks and soft beverages</li> </ul>
14:45 – 16:00	Closing and final remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short outline of process for preparing the final report, for June 2024 FAO Council meeting</li> <li>• Closing remarks from Canadian and US leads: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Executive Director Kanwal Kochhar, and US State Department Deputy Assistant Secretary Nerissa Cook</li> </ul>