

170th Session of the Council

Sub-Item 9.6: Report of the Seventh Informal Regional Conference for North America (United States of America, 12-14 April 2022)

It is our pleasure and honor to present the Report of the Seventh Informal Regional Conference for North America held from 12-14 April 2022.

The Informal Regional Conference for North America (iNARC) was established in 2010 as a forum for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the North American Region (United States of America and Canada) to strengthen collaboration between the region's Members and the Organization. Though informal in its format, as distinct from other Regional Conferences, we consider the priorities detailed in the 2022 iNARC Report to be a formal declaration of the North American region's views regarding FAO's strategic programming. Canada and the United States of America expect these views be given equal consideration to the reports of other Regional Conferences in FAO's budgetary and operational planning and reporting. Through the iNARC meetings, we have sought to express the North American region's views on FAO's work and activities globally, as well as our region's views on effective institutional governance.

Overview

Deeply concerned by global trends in food security, the North American region (the region) recommends FAO use its unique position as a lead UN food security agency to enhance system-wide coordination and action, notably by way of its policy advice and recommendations, its scientific standard setting function and technical cooperation role. The region also recommends FAO utilize its leadership to address the escalating food crisis and far-reaching effects on global hunger of Russia's unprovoked and unjustified war in Ukraine. The region reaffirms its commitment to strong collaboration with FAO and its Members, appreciating the frank and open exchange of the biennial Informal North America Regional Conference (iNARC).

The region calls on FAO to continue to aspire for best-in-class management to foster effective governance, transparency and internal management practices; focus on implementation of ambitious climate change and science and innovation strategies; and extend its attention on pandemic recovery and building food systems resilience, prioritizing sustainable productivity growth, free and fair trade, gender-responsive approaches and co-development initiatives with indigenous peoples and vulnerable communities. The North American region emphasizes FAO's enduring added-value supporting normative work and standard-setting bodies, underpinned by science.

The priorities for the region include:

1. *Ukraine and impact on global food security*
 - a. Provide sufficient resources, data analysis, gender, and climate-responsive policy recommendations.
 - b. Keep food and fertilizer markets open and transparent.
 - c. Assist countries worst affected with overcoming food security challenges.
2. *Governance*
 - a. Foster Member consensus on a robust code of conduct for elections.
 - b. Welcome a Management and Administrative Review of the Joint Inspection Unit of the UN (JIU) as soon as possible.
3. *Climate Change and Resilience*
 - a. Increase support to Members for sustainable productivity growth, reducing emissions, enhancing carbon sequestration in agriculture, and adaptation, through an ambitious, cross-cutting approach inclusive of innovations and building on relevant international initiatives.
4. *Science and Innovation*

- a. Deliver world-class tools, advice and public goods to address current and emerging threats.
 - b. Promote science and innovation as critical to building more sustainable, equitable, productive and resilient food systems.
5. *Agricultural Trade*
- a. Provide technical assistance to help countries realize the benefits of trade and enhance global food security.

The highlights of the proceedings of the iNARC were:

- There was a consensus from North American region speakers that Russia’s war on Ukraine has exacerbated the already dire global food security situation.
- The FAO delegation stressed while more funding is required to address humanitarian needs in Ukraine, it must strive to achieve balance with the other global food security crises, which before the war in Ukraine, were already at levels not seen since World War II.
- The region emphasized support for the vision and goal of the Science and Innovation Strategy noting the importance of science and innovation to creating resilient sustainable food systems that are able to produce more with less.
- The region underlined FAO’s critically important role in addressing the climate crisis and said the Strategy on Climate Change would guide FAO during this decisive decade for climate action
 - Canada and the United States of America discussed how mitigation should be equally important and captured as a standalone goal of the Strategy
- The region emphasized the importance of the FAO COVID-19 Response and Recovery Program in fostering resilient food systems, noting Canada’s financial contribution of CAD 22.4 million, and the United States of America’s contribution of USD 10 million.
- The Rome-based Agencies should strengthen collaboration at the global, regional and country levels.

The North American region broke out into bilateral sessions and covered a range of topics, including: Related Global initiatives: the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) Coalitions and the UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP 27); New/Innovative Protein Developments and Sustainability Benefits to Food Systems; Gender Equality and Indigenous Peoples; The Committee on Fisheries and Fisheries Issues, especially in relation to climate change and resilience; The Committee on Forestry and Forestry Issues; Food Systems for Healthy Diets; Standard Setting Bodies; Private Sector Strategy; One Health, African Swine Fever (ASF), Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), and the Codex Alimentarius (CODEX); Food Loss and Waste; and Governance, with FAO urged to reinforce and empower existing governance structures to maintain and improve efficiency of guidance and decision-making at the Council.

Conclusion

Participants noted that the exceptionally strong partnership between North America and FAO is grounded in a strong commitment to science, innovation, and the Organization’s global role supporting normative and standard setting work for food and agriculture. The region highlighted the critical role food systems must play in emissions reduction and the need for technology to accelerate food system transformations. The North American region envisioned an agile, accountable and effective FAO delivering world-class tools, advice, and public goods to address current and emerging threats to global food security.

Ms Michelle Sison, Chairperson of the Seventh Informal Regional Conference for North America (iNARC)