



**Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations**

**World Health  
Organization**



GF/INF 01

## **Report of the Preparatory Meeting for the Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators**

*Malaysia Room, FAO Headquarters, 27 February 2001*

The meeting was held in FAO Headquarters on 27 February 2001. All members of the G-8<sup>1</sup> were represented, except Russia. Representatives of the European Community were also present. The list of participants is attached as Annex 2.

The meeting was held at the joint invitation by FAO and WHO which were represented by Mrs. Anne Kern, Executive Director, Sustainable Development and Health Environments of WHO, and Mr. Hartwig de Haen, Assistant Director-General, Economic and Social Department of FAO. Mr. de Haen provided the participants with the meeting background in reference to the G8 Summit in Okinawa. The convenience/feasibility of holding regular global fora of food safety regulators was the main objective of the meeting.

The meeting was co-chaired by Mr. Hartwig de Haen and Mrs. Anne Kern. It approved the provisional agenda (see Annex 1) without change.

The main outcome of the meeting is summarised below.

### **1. Proposed Concept of Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators**

The Meeting reviewed document PM/02, prepared by FAO and WHO on this item. Participants concurred that the proposal to convene global fora of food safety regulators, as described in the background note, was desirable, feasible and timely.

The Meeting developed a consensus on the focus and purpose of such fora. These were defined as an exchange of information and experience acquired by countries on ways of dealing with food safety issues, methods of risk management and communication, information and rapid alert systems. The agendas of such fora should be clearly separated from activities of Codex Alimentarius; they should complement or support, but not duplicate, those of other meetings. It was further agreed that the global food safety fora would not make decisions, but exchange information, describe alternative options, share and learn from national experiences and seek mutual understanding on issues and response strategies with regard to food safety problems of common concern. While focussing on national approaches to food safety issues the fora would seek to identify a global perspective in coping with certain risks, including crisis management and prevention policies and measures.

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<sup>1</sup> Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom and USA.

## **2. Preparatory Meeting for a First Global Forum**

The Meeting strongly recommended that another Preparatory Meeting be organised in Italy during the second week of May 2001, with the participation of representatives of all regions of the world, with 2-4 countries per region in addition to G-8 Members, in total not more than 30 countries. This second preparatory meeting would address details of the first Global Forum including agenda, participation, papers to be prepared, budget, etc. With regard to the selection of participating countries, FAO and WHO indicated that they would request their respective Regional Groups to propose two countries per region to be invited to the Preparatory Meeting. Only government officials will be invited to this meeting.

## **3. Arrangements for the First Forum**

- ***Venue and Date***

The Meeting recommended that the first Global Forum be held in a developing country/country in transition. It requested FAO and WHO to explore possibilities, taking into account, among other factors, international transportation convenience and suitability of meeting facilities, and to present a concrete proposal at the Preparatory Meeting.

Because of the importance of the subject matter, the Meeting recommended that the first Global Forum be held in October 2001. The exact timing would be decided at the Preparatory Meeting, in consultation with the prospective host government. The eventual host country should naturally be invited to attend the Preparatory Meeting. The Meeting took note that some of the ASEAN countries which could potentially host the Forum might not be available in the month of October due to an accumulation of other meetings in that period.

Concerning the length of the Forum, the Meeting discussed that the Global Forum might have a duration of 2 to 3 days. The details would be decided at the Preparatory Meeting taking into account the Forum agenda/content.

- ***Attendees***

The Meeting recommended that these should be senior government officials involved in food safety/food control activities and in food safety risk management from all member countries of FAO and WHO, representatives of relevant international organizations and of INGOs.

- ***Languages***

It was recommended that, at least for the first Global Forum, the six official languages of FAO and WHO (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) be used.

- ***Reporting***

The Meeting felt that a formal reporting of the Forum to another Body or Organization would not be desirable. It was suggested that a Summary Report followed by a publication of the proceedings would be appropriate.

- **Funding**

There was a general agreement that extra-budgetary support was needed to enable FAO and WHO to convene the Preparatory Meeting and the first Global Forum, and that all Members of the G-7 should contribute to this effort. The Italian Delegation indicated that Italy could consider to fund the May 2001 Preparatory Meeting. As regards the first Global Forum, FAO and WHO were asked to elaborate a revised budget estimate and to submit it to the G-7 members as soon as possible with the aim to have a commitment prior to the May 2001 meeting.

The delegation of Japan informed that Japan might find it difficult to mobilize funds if the Forum was to be held within their next budget year (April to March).

#### 4. **First Global Forum's Themes/Topics**

The four themes proposed by FAO/WHO were discussed and found generally acceptable. They include:

- Experiences in reduction of food-borne hazards
- A global food safety emergency communications network
- Precaution in risk management
- Consumer information and participation

The Meeting agreed that the input of developing countries is vital to the development of a meaningful agenda. The Meeting agreed that the Forum is intended to complement, rather than duplicate, the work of Codex and that this must be taken into account in agenda development. It proposed that a more extensive list of potential themes should be prepared by the Secretariat as a starting point for consideration by participants at the May 2001 Preparatory Meeting. This list should include subjects/themes of interest to developing member countries. Additional potential agenda items were: interactions between food safety risk assessors and risk managers, **food** safety enforcement, emerging foodborne illnesses, new inspection models; and experiences with the implementation of Codex guidelines and standards. It was agreed that each possible agenda item should be communicated with an explanation of why it could be considered. Concern was expressed that to focus on controversial or sensitive topics on the agenda of the first Forum could unnecessarily detract from its usefulness.



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**Preparatory meeting for the Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators**

*Malaysia Room (B227), FAO Headquarters  
0930 hours, 27 February 2001*

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## **Preparatory meeting for the Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators**

*Malaysia Room (B227), FAO Headquarters  
0930 hours, 27 February 2001*

### **Provisional Agenda**

Welcoming remarks

1. The proposed concept of Global Fora of Food Safety Regulators
2. The arrangements for the first Global Forum of Food Safety Regulators
  - Proposed Agenda of the first Global Forum
  - Venue and Date
  - Participants
  - Reporting
3. Funding of the Global Fora
4. Other matters