

Rome, 29 May 2018

Dear CFS Bureau members,

As promised, I am sharing with you a non-paper on recommendation 4 of the Independent External Evaluation of CFS. The attached non-paper has been conceived as a self-explanatory narrative of facts and observations that are provided, primarily, for context. I hope that it could also serve as a contribution for finding a way forward on a subject where clarity has eluded us for far too long.

Advisory Group improvement is of the highest political importance for CFS. Along with many of you, I have consistently argued for a strong, inclusive, transparent, dynamic, flexible and efficient Advisory Group.

As a country representative, as G77 Vice Chair in 2008 and Chair in 2009, as well as an advisor to then CFS Chair María Squeff, I had the privilege to take a stand for the creation of the Advisory Group and the mechanisms for the Civil Society and the Private Sector, notwithstanding intense reluctance—and sometimes fierce resistance—from within my own regional group, as well as from others.

Despite the Advisory Group's proven significance, ever since its creation and up until the present day, we have lacked clear agreement on its functions and processes. Earlier this month, at the most recent joint meeting, member States and stakeholders were still confused about exactly what the Advisory Group is supposed to do, and how it should do it.

The composition of the Advisory Group and the distribution of seats in it have been the proverbial 'elephant in the room' from the start: a difficult situation to begin with, whose convolutedness we have contributed to by virtue of—to use another figure of speech—kicking it, time and again, down the road.

Indeed, the complications surrounding membership in the Advisory Group have grown to such extremes that some of us (I am told) might prefer to simply avoid the subject. Such course of action is not tenable: the cruelest—and most accurate—metaphor we keep hearing when we try to equivocate on this and other CFS issues that require political and moral courage, is that we must not continue to 'rearrange the decks on the Titanic,' but rather step up and resolve the situation. We must address and settle the issues surrounding the Advisory Group before the current membership's tenure ends on 23 July 2018.

Because of its nature as a self-explanatory narrative for context, I am deeply reluctant to provide a summary of the non-paper, and kindly ask you to read it in full. Please note that the English text is followed by a Spanish version.

We are all painfully aware that we are constantly asked to read many pages. While the non-paper represents an additional burden, I hope you will look at it with fresh eyes.

I remain at your disposal, and indeed at the disposal of all member States and stakeholders of CFS to converse about the non-paper and any other issue related to the committee. My mobile number is +39 380 250 4006 and my personal email is mario@marioarvelo.com

Thank you!

Mario Arvelo
CFS Chair

Chair's non-paper on recommendation 4 of the evaluation of CFS

Introduction

1. *The present document was originally foreseen as an exercise for comprehending the historical and institutional context of recommendation 4 and its implications, so as to inform the author's constructive engagement in a results-oriented conversation on Advisory Group improvement. The body of information gathered by studying the applicable texts, the understanding drawn from exchanging views with colleagues and stakeholders in Rome and while on duty travel across all regions, and the accrued experience from preparing, presiding and following up CFS meetings, together with notes/memories from the Chair's involvement in the CFS reform process of 2007-09, have resulted in a chronicle of facts and observations, as well as ideas and suggestions, that may be found to be useful in the discussion on a way forward.*
2. *The Chair takes advantage of this opportunity to reaffirm his neutrality on all issues under consideration by the Committee, and to assert that this non-paper is not intended to serve as a basis for negotiations but merely as [a] an explanatory approach to the question of Advisory Group improvement, and [b] a tool for supporting the larger process of CFS evaluation.*

Background

3. *The CFS plenary is, and should continue to be, "the central body for decision-taking, debate, coordination, lesson-learning and convergence by all stakeholders at global level on issues pertaining to food security and nutrition."¹ The Bureau, representing "the broader membership of the CFS between plenary sessions"² is mandated to "perform tasks delegated to it by the plenary."³*
4. *The Advisory Group was conceived in the framework of a reform package negotiated and adopted during the 2007-09 biennium, to reflect the newly inclusive character of CFS: an intergovernmental body that incorporates other stakeholders. The Advisory Group as ultimately approved by the plenary evolved from a blueprint where non-State actors would be full-fledged members of an expanded Bureau; this proposition proved politically unfeasible because of a lack of agreement on the allocation of voting rights for non-State actors.⁴*
5. *It was agreed that "the function of the Advisory Group is to provide input to the Bureau regarding the range of tasks which the CFS plenary has instructed it to perform [while] decision making will be in the hands of the member States."⁵ The Advisory Group interacts with the Bureau to: [a] promote engagements with relevant actors and exchange information, [b] provide inputs, [c] identify issues and raise awareness about them, and [d] disseminate outcomes⁶. Its mandate does not include promoting policy positions.⁷*

¹ CFS 2009/9 Rev.2 (henceforth "Reform Document"), paragraph 20.

² Ibid, paragraph 29.

³ Ibid, paragraph 30.

⁴ Notes taken by the Chair, who took part of the CFS reform negotiations as G77 Vice Chair in 2008 and G77 Chair in 2009, as well as an advisor to then CFS Chair María Squeff.

⁵ Reform Document, paragraph 32.

⁶ CFS Rules of Procedure, rule IV, paragraph 3.

⁷ This has been an informal understanding; the promotion of policy positions has usually been discouraged in the Advisory Group. Non-State actors have always been welcomed to promote policy positions in the plenary, in the open-ended working groups, and in other CFS fora. See paragraph 21 of this non-paper.

6. *After three full biennia, an independent external evaluation of the reformed CFS examined all its aspects to assess the committee's working methods and structures, identify strengths and weaknesses, and propose corrections where needed⁸. Following common practice in reviewing multilateral entities, the evaluators approached governance arrangements reluctantly, in the understanding that this is a realm of a predominantly political nature that member States should address in an intergovernmental framework.*

7. *The evaluation recognized that the current structure and methods of the Advisory Group hinder its effectiveness. In an attempt to provide pragmatic solutions to observed shortcomings, the evaluation proposed that the Bureau should "review the composition and processes of the Advisory Group to ensure that it is able to perform its functions effectively,"⁹ while some of its analysis and proposals¹⁰ could have been clearer and more ambitious¹¹. The evaluation:*
 - a. *Did not examine the 2007-09 discussions and compromises that led to the creation of the Advisory Group¹²;*

 - b. *Chose not to follow up its own consideration that addressing the evolving dynamics of effective governance is a far more important issue for CFS than trying to reconcile disagreements between non-State actors or attempting to resolve their positioning maneuvers in a platform whose value and relevance arise from its inclusiveness¹³—which is the first "guiding principle of the reform,"¹⁴ while the third is flexibility "so that CFS can respond to a changing external environment and membership needs;"¹⁵*

 - c. *Argued, in the context of a petition from the Private Sector for 'parity of seats' with the Civil Society (by having the PSM number of seats increased to four in order to match those of CSM), that the latter should retain a higher number of seats vis-à-vis the former as a symbolic act "to give priority to those voices that historically have been marginalized,"¹⁶ alleging that "to give parity in the allocation of seats will only serve to reinforce the asymmetry of power between civil society and the private sector within the context of a multi-stakeholder platform"¹⁷ and that such equalizing would "undermine the principles of the reform."¹⁸ While rhetorically appealing, these arguments lack legal basis, are not supported by the Reform Document and tread on precarious political ground, because they imply that the voices of CFS stakeholders might not be equally heard when, in fact, the number of seats has no impact whatsoever on Advisory Group members' capacity to comply with their mandate to the fullest extent. In other*

⁸ The evaluation made fourteen recommendations; the final report was published in April 2017.

⁹ Final Report of the CFS Evaluation, paragraph 284.

¹⁰ Ibid, paragraph 286.

¹¹ Recommendation 4 on governance arrangements was partially accepted by CFS.

¹² Negotiations surrounding the Advisory Group grew to such intricacy that the whole process was continuously threatened with derailment; the final agreements focused on immediate solutions to existing disputes (see note 4), pending an evolutionary process towards Phase II of CFS reform (Reform Document, paragraphs 3 and 6).

¹³ "The contestation over the membership [...] the representation and the distribution of seats [...] threaten to reduce the effectiveness of the Advisory Group" (Final Report of the CFS Evaluation, paragraph 261).

¹⁴ Reform Document, paragraph 3.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Final Report of the CFS Evaluation, paragraph 286(i).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

words, having a single seat in the Advisory Group guarantees a voice that can be conveyed through any number of individual persons or constituencies¹⁹; and

- d. Refrained from proposing the most obvious and, indeed, the most advantageous solution for CFS and everyone involved: an expansion in the total number of Advisory Group seats.
8. The plenary concurred with the evaluation in that the Advisory Group remains anchored in the timeframe of its foundational circumstances, when CFS was essentially being reinvented with a particularly narrow focus on contemporaneous concerns²⁰. Mindful of the evolving dynamics in the global governance of food security and nutrition seen in the last decade, the plenary concluded that the Advisory Group requires a profound review of its composition and processes²¹.
9. Consequently, the plenary instructed the Bureau to appoint the Advisory Group for an exceptionally short term of five months instead of the usual two years, to “consider if changes are needed in the composition of the Advisory Group for the remainder of the Bureau’s term, taking into account the implementation of the response to recommendation 4 and the need for any plenary decisions.”²²
10. A set of Bureau-drafted Terms of Reference²³ for the Advisory Group did not introduce new concepts beyond what had been generally anticipated in the Reform Document, stressing that the Advisory Group should seek to achieve “a balance between inclusiveness and effectiveness”²⁴ while emphasizing the need for “flexibility [in the context of] changing priorities.”²⁵
- II. Open-ended consultations on the Advisory Group eventually adopted by the plenary concluded *inter alia* that “[a] the Bureau should remain open to receiving advice from more stakeholders, considering the need for reviewing the number of categories²⁶ and seats; [b] the Bureau should clarify the support required from the Advisory Group before appointing it; [c] the principle of inclusiveness²⁷ should drive [its] composition; and [d] the appointment of *ad hoc* participants, [...] as per the Rules of Procedure²⁸, allows flexibility and inclusiveness to better respond to CFS priorities.”²⁹

¹⁹ The allocation of more than one seat to any mechanism creates further political difficulties, as other members and stakeholders routinely engage in convoluted calculations to propose possible scenarios for distributing an artificially limited number of seats.

²⁰ See notes 4 and 12.

²¹ CFS 2017/44/Report, paragraph 36(f), *in fine*. This point is revisited in paragraph 12 of this non-paper.

²² *Ibid.*, paragraph 36(e). The term of the Advisory Group appointed on 31 October 2017 expired on 31 March 2018. Mindful of the needs to safeguard the inclusiveness of CFS, to reaffirm its institutional framework, and to take into account ongoing discussion on other aspects of the evaluation, the Chair—in the spirit of CFS flexibility—proposed and the Bureau agreed (by non-objection with a lapse-of-time of 8 April 2018) to extend the mandate of the Advisory Group until 23 July 2018.

²³ Outcomes (minutes) of the Bureau meeting of 21 January 2010.

²⁴ *Ibid.* This formulation was taken from paragraph 7 of the Reform Document.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ The categories listed in paragraph 11 of the Reform Document are: [a] United Nations agencies and bodies with a specific mandate in the field of food security and nutrition such as FAO, IFAD, WFP; [b] Civil society and non-governmental organizations; [c] International agricultural research institutions; [d] International and regional financial institutions; and [e] Private sector associations and philanthropic foundations.

²⁷ It is worth recalling that inclusiveness is the first “guiding principle of the reform,” (Reform Document, paragraph 3) as referred in paragraph 7b of this non-paper.

²⁸ CFS Rules of Procedure, rule IV, paragraph 5.

²⁹ CFS 2017/44/12 Rev.1, paragraph 24.

12. *The plenary also recognized that “the Bureau does not currently take full advantage of the Advisory Group and the expertise and knowledge of the broad spectrum of voices of the constituencies it represents [and decided that] CFS will review the composition and processes of the Advisory Group to ensure that it is able to perform its functions effectively.”³⁰*
13. *Building on the abovementioned directives, steps taken in the current biennium towards proposing, discussing and seeking consensus solutions on Advisory Group improvement include:*
- a. *During the Bureau meeting of 31 October 2017, the Chair urged the members to tackle the issue through the multiple lenses of inclusiveness, flexibility, openness and transparency;*
 - b. *On 23 November 2017, members and stakeholders met as ‘Friends of the CFS Chair’ to engage in an informal dialogue;³¹*
 - c. *On 31 January 2018, the Bureau noted that the mandate of the Advisory Group would conclude on 31 March 2018, and that the plenary decided that a new one would need to be appointed taking into account the changes needed in its processes and structure;³²*
 - d. *On 5 February 2018, the co-facilitators of the open-ended working group on evaluation recalled that the issue must be addressed with flexibility, including through the use of *ad hoc* members, and that the Bureau should remain open to receiving advice from more stakeholders³³, while the meeting agreed³⁴, *inter alia*, that [i] as a prerequisite to discussions on Advisory Group improvement, the Bureau should better clarify its intersessional role, the preparation of plenaries and what kind of advice it needs, and [ii] that the inclusiveness and representativeness of the Advisory Group must be improved; and*
 - e. *As an input to the 5 February 2018 meeting, the delegations of Egypt and Iceland presented a joint proposal for Advisory Group improvement³⁵.*

Possible ways forward

14. *After reviewing all applicable rules, relevant outcomes, oral and written interventions by members and stakeholders, and conducting numerous conversations on how a way forward would look like for the Advisory Group with the best interest of CFS as the paramount consideration³⁶, the Chair has reflected on the following observations and possibilities.*

³⁰ Ibid, paragraph 23 and Action 4.1.

³¹ Although this meeting was not conducted under the Chatham House Rule, the Chair explained that —to encourage candid interventions— minutes would not be drafted. The Chair’s notes indicate that the recurring themes of inclusiveness, flexibility, openness and transparency kept being reiterated throughout.

³² CFS/Bur/2018/01/31/Outcomes. See note 22.

³³ CFS 2017/44/12 Rev.1, paragraph 24.

³⁴ CFSEvaluation2018/02/05/04.

³⁵ The Secretariat received written comments, either on the joint proposal or as stand-alone submissions, from Afghanistan, CGIAR, CSM, Italy, PSM, UNSCN, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, WFO and WFP. See note 42.

³⁶ As in most other multilateral debates, while there might be unanimous accord on the general principles (in this case, that the uniqueness of CFS and its potential for influencing decision making in the realm of food security and nutrition arise from its inclusiveness, flexibility, openness and transparency), disagreements ensue on how those concepts should materialize.

15. *The concepts of inclusiveness, flexibility, openness and transparency represent the fundamental characteristics and constitute both the essence and the strength of CFS as the foremost global platform for debating and seeking coherence/convergence in food security and nutrition policies, while benefiting from the widest and most pertinent participation of a range of actors that can engage in a meaningful way*³⁷.
16. *Because of bureaucratization, deceleration and loss of focus in several areas of CFS, including a perceived drifting of the Advisory Group from its core mandate and expected usefulness, there is a feeling of growing urgency for addressing the plenary-agreed need for improvement, including “the need for reviewing the number of categories and seats.”*³⁸ *This is especially true in the larger context of the response and implementation of the evaluation, which should lead to a rejuvenated CFS that is more dynamic, responsive and effective.*
17. *As the initial expectations for the Advisory Group have grown from being a guidance provider to becoming “a space of collaboration and dialogue”*³⁹, *and in light of the “increased diversity and complexity of the issues to be addressed [which need] more nuanced advice across a spectrum of social, economic, political, and technical spheres,”*⁴⁰ *the Bureau should undertake Advisory Group improvement from a needs-based perspective. This approach calls for inclusiveness, flexibility, openness and transparency as drivers/providers of clarity of purpose under the evaluation’s more strategic recommendations*⁴¹.

On the functions and processes of the Advisory Group

18. *Throughout the conversations held on the issue of Advisory Group improvement, contributors have concurred on the importance of clarifying the expectations on its functions/processes before discussing the composition, as the former will have an impact and largely justify the latter.*
19. *CFS annual cycles and the more strategic, structured and results-oriented multi-year program of work, should enable the scheduling of Bureau and Advisory Group joint meetings*⁴² *in a number that could range from three to six per year*⁴³, *according to needs.*
20. *Joint meetings might have to be approached differently in order to incorporate more transparent modalities for handling inputs, including [a] urging the Bureau to clarify, giving sufficient notice, what kind of contribution it will require on which specific agenda items, so that the Advisory Group can be in a position to provide substantive and meaningful advice, [b] enabling those*

³⁷ As previously quoted, Paragraph 7 of the Reform Document calls for CFS to strike “a balance between inclusiveness and effectiveness,” but neither dimension is being fully met in the Advisory Group: during the most recent joint meeting in the morning of 3 May 2018 at WFP, attendees were still perplexed as to the nature and scope of the expected/appropriate interaction between the Advisory Group and the Bureau.

³⁸ CFS 2017/44/12 Rev.1, paragraph 24 (third bullet on “Composition”).

³⁹ Intervention by the Civil Society Mechanism in the evaluation meeting of 5 February 2018. See CFS Rules of Procedure, rule IV, paragraph 3(a).

⁴⁰ Intervention by the Private Sector Mechanism in the evaluation meeting of 5 February 2018.

⁴¹ Recommendation 1 on a “medium-to-long term” horizon covering three biennia (Final Report of the CFS Evaluation, paragraphs 276-280), complemented by recommendation 2 on a streamlined and prioritized multi-year program of work (Ibid, paragraphs 281-282).

⁴² It is generally understood that, for the time being, there are neither political conditions nor technical reasons to sustain the possibility of having stand-alone Advisory Group meetings, i.e. outside of the Bureau’s sphere. Likewise, it is not considered viable at this point for non-State actors to participate in Bureau meetings, even as silent observers.

⁴³ The Bureau could require the convening of extraordinary meetings, which may take place either with or without a preceding joint meeting.

Advisory Group members who cannot physically attend to participate through appropriate communications means, and [c] encouraging stakeholders to explore possible common views⁴⁴. The CFS website could provide a space for Advisory Group members to exchange ideas, perspectives, etc. in advance of the meetings.

21. *In order to facilitate tasks related to a “two-way exchange of information”⁴⁵ so that the Advisory Group can “contribute substantive work and provide advise”⁴⁶ by way of “active engagement and participation in CFS work, either through physical attendance or other means,”⁴⁷ while ensuring that CFS work is demand-driven⁴⁸, joint meetings could include (in addition to the subsequent Bureau’s agenda) standing items such as:⁴⁹*
- a. Critical, emerging and/or urgent issues in food security and nutrition;*
 - b. Matters that have an impact in the progressive realization of the right to food;*
 - c. Questions of gender and youth in food security and nutrition;*
 - d. Appropriate/significant proposals, activities, conferences, developments, etc., in food security and nutrition, taking place in Rome and other UN capitals, as well as in relevant national, regional and global fora.*

N.B. This paragraph can be seamlessly linked to paragraph 2c[i]f^o on the implementation of the response to recommendation 7, which reads: “CFS Members are invited to strengthen the links between CFS policy processes and outcomes and ongoing initiatives and agendas of regional intergovernmental mechanisms and organisations, to strengthen policy coherence at this level [...] CFS Bureau and Advisory Group members could provide regular updates on ongoing initiatives and/or future events which are relevant to the work of CFS taking place in their regions or within their constituencies.”

22. *Joint meetings could be held on a day that is separate from the Bureau meeting (as opposed to the current practice of holding both the joint meeting and the Bureau meeting on the same day)⁵¹, to provide [a] better clarity of purpose for each meeting, and [b] a reflection period for Bureau members before decisions are taken. This arrangement should also stimulate/motivate wider participation and more in-depth engagement from both Advisory Group and Bureau members.*
23. *The Bureau might wish to consider, with support from the Secretariat, embarking on a review of the current system of yearly monitoring of contributions made by Advisory Group members, to identify strengths and improvement opportunities for each constituency/mechanism (and*

⁴⁴ It has been observed that the existing mechanisms and other stakeholders find themselves to hold shared stances during actual meetings. It is self-evident that it would be of great political and technical value for CFS if such conjunctions could be identified before formal meetings are held.

⁴⁵ CFS Rules of Procedure, rule IV, paragraph 3(a).

⁴⁶ CFS 2017/44/12 Rev.1, paragraph 24 (first bullet on “Process”).

⁴⁷ Ibid, third bullet on “Process.”

⁴⁸ Paragraph 13 of the most recent draft of the Evaluation Implementation Report.

⁴⁹ The following is an illustrative enumeration, not a prescriptive listing.

⁵⁰ Evaluation 2018/03/20/03 of 20 March 2018.

⁵¹ The next joint and Bureau meetings have been scheduled for separate days (23 and 25 July 2018) both for [a] accommodating an expectedly lengthy agenda, and [b] as a trial for assessing the wisdom of this suggestion.

potential cluster), as well as for the whole, with a view to bolster their relationship with CFS where possible.⁵²

On the composition of, and distribution of seats in, the Advisory Group

24. *While the Reform Document envisioned a flexible Advisory Group and therefore did not establish a specific number of seats⁵³, the CFS Rules of Procedure (as a tool to guide the operationalization of the Reform Document) enacted a more restrictive formulation: “The number of members of the Advisory Group shall not exceed that of the members of the Bureau including the Chairperson, unless otherwise decided by the Committee.”⁵⁴ This modification is seen as a self-defeating proposition, because any given actor’s relevance within a body whose value emanates from its inclusiveness can only be determined through a flexible open-door policy where actual inputs are transparently assessed.*
25. *Furthermore, circular discussions reveal that trying to determine what would be the ‘ideal’ number of seats in the Advisory Group is, ultimately, a pointless task: one-dimensional models constrain themselves to rearranging a narrow number of seats based on motives that are transient and/or arbitrary, when the simplest and most useful solution is to enlarge the Advisory Group itself.⁵⁵ Beyond the self-evident gains that inclusiveness provides⁵⁶, an expanded Advisory Group is justified by:
 - a. *The importance of eradicating hunger and malnutrition as the final objective of everything CFS is supposed to do—a point to be considered in the context of the rising number in hungry and malnourished persons throughout the world, with a disproportionate increase among women, children and the elderly across the Global South;*
 - b. *The escalating complexities and fluctuating challenges to food security and nutrition—a point to be considered in the context of climate change, migrations and armed conflict, and the protracted crises they cause;*
 - c. *The growing number and the rapidly evolving *modus operandi* of the intergovernmental and, especially, of the non-State actors that operate both within and outside of the categories listed in the Reform Document⁵⁷.**
26. *The reform established a mechanism-based CFS⁵⁸. The by-and-large positive experience of CSM and PSM as the first two structured entities of the reformed CFS constitutes a useful model for the Bureau to actively encourage a range of stakeholders to coalesce into these and other mechanisms. The Bureau might wish to review and recommend to the plenary practical adjustments for*

⁵² CFS 2017/44/12 Rev.1, paragraph 24 (third bullet on “Process”). The Bureau exhibited an extremely low level of interest in terms of analyzing, probing or following up when presented with the most recent yearly reports.

⁵³ Paragraph 32 of the Reform Document was negotiated to read that membership in the Advisory Group “normally will not exceed that of the CFS Bureau in numbers.” The word ‘normally’ was inserted to allow any number of seats in the Advisory Group or, more reasonably, not to have a fixed number.

⁵⁴ CFS Rules of Procedure, rule IV, paragraph 1.

⁵⁵ The continuous enlargement of the United Nations, where membership has multiplied fourfold since the enactment of its Charter, is an obvious example of how the nature of multilateralism generates strength for each individual member, and legitimacy for the whole, through growth in numbers.

⁵⁶ Suggesting that an increase in inclusiveness will result in an erosion of effectiveness would be a misguided move towards curtailing both dimensions; see paragraph 7 of the Reform Document.

⁵⁷ See note 26 for the list of categories, which the plenary has instructed the Bureau to review (CFS 2017/44/12 Rev.1, paragraph 24).

⁵⁸ Reform Document, paragraph 17.

participation under the five original categories (beyond CSM and PSM) with a view to developing the following mechanisms:

- a. *United Nations. Because of the nature of CFS and its special relationship with the three Rome-based agencies, participation by FAO, IFAD and WFP should have been considered ex officio from the beginning, so that their presence in the Advisory Group is always guaranteed, and the number of seats that they occupy do not count against entry by other stakeholders; some entities listed in the Reform Document⁵⁹ have either ceased or diminished their involvement in the Advisory Group (UNHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF) or disappeared altogether (HLTF) while others, such as WHO, eventually joined the Advisory Group. Indeed, WHO's inclusion in the Advisory Group at the outset of the current biennium, eight years after approval of the Reform Document, is widely regarded as a successful addition and as a harbinger for attracting other UN bodies. The idea behind a mechanism for the UN is to bring together all relevant agencies and bodies so they can interact and formulate individual and joint messages from an overarching space that is inclusive and flexible.*
- b. *International, regional and national research systems. The Reform Document specifically mentions the CGIAR, which has been making meaningful contributions, while the words 'and others' in that same section⁶⁰ should motivate the Bureau to call for the inclusion of regional and national research organizations that can contribute to the work of CFS, especially in support of the labors of the High Level Panel of Experts and its ad hoc Project Teams, as well as the Technical Tasks Teams that support the various workstreams. In point of fact, the coordination that is already been made by CGIAR is a clear and useful example for establishing 'soft' mechanisms or clusters referred to in paragraph 28 of this non-paper.*
- c. *Global and regional financial organizations. The constant and severe financial constraints of CFS, which weaken the work of the HLPE, hinder the timely translation of official documents, and prevent translation/interpretation outside of plenary (including for Bureau and Advisory Group meetings)⁶¹ should be reason enough to seek closer interaction with entities whose mandate involve identifying/mobilizing financial resources. Of the entities listed in the Reform Document⁶², the World Bank has lowered its profile in the Advisory Group⁶³ while the others (IMF, WTO and regional development banks) have not interacted meaningfully within the Advisory Group in many years. The Bureau could consider reaching out to these and other global/regional financial entities.*
- d. *Philanthropic foundations. While the CFS reform negotiations may have visualized philanthropies as appendages of private enterprises, their idiosyncratic nature, operational modalities and potential for supporting CFS in issues such as resource mobilization (see the*

⁵⁹ Ibid, paragraph 11-i.

⁶⁰ Ibid, paragraph 11-iii.

⁶¹ The lack of language support —i.e., absence of translation and interpretation into the official languages of the United Nations, which forces participants to interact in English only— has been identified as an “important limiting factor” (Final Report of the CFS Evaluation, ES21) which “runs the risk of undermining the important principle of inclusiveness” (Ibid, paragraph 230). This recurring grievance, which (as the evaluation also points out in paragraph 230) creates an unfair advantage for those individuals for whom English is their native tongue and handicaps those for whom it is not, came up most recently during the Group of 77 plenary of 18 May 2018.

⁶² Reform Document, paragraph 11-iv.

⁶³ The Chair has been seeking renewed involvement from the World Bank in recent weeks, including with its Global Agriculture and Food Security Program, which has been collaborating with the OEWG on SDGs.

previous point on finances) make them partners with unique/distinct characteristics and expertise, including their know-how in advocacy and dissemination.⁶⁴

27. It is obvious that the interest from civil society and the private sector to coalesce into 'structured' mechanisms provided them with standing and legitimacy within CFS. While it is not clear whether other constituencies would conclude that there is a cost-benefit justification for merging into new mechanisms, it is true that [a] various entities and organizations do not necessarily fit within the original categories, and [b] that a number of these entities and organizations are able and willing to make consequential, sustained, direct (or subsidiary) contributions to CFS. These contributions could be channeled either through 'structured' or 'soft' machineries. Although the experience of CSM and PSM includes developing complex internal configurations, these may or may not serve as blueprints for other mechanisms⁶⁵. The rapidly evolving *modus operandi* of intergovernmental and non-State actors that can play a meaningful role in the global governance of food security and nutrition could prompt the Bureau to attract their involvement, taking into account that some may not fit within the existing categories or mechanisms.
28. Consequently, and further to paragraph 26 on CFS as a mechanism-based body, the plenary sought "other CFS stakeholders [to be] encouraged to autonomously establish and maintain a permanent coordination mechanism for participation in the CFS and for actions derived from that participation at global, regional and national levels."⁶⁶ In application of Phase II of the reform⁶⁷, CFS should "build on and strengthen [...] linkages with key partners at all levels [including] national mechanisms and networks for food security and nutrition, the UN country teams and other coordination mechanisms, [...] food security thematic groups, regional intergovernmental bodies," while calling for the composition of the consultation and coordination mechanisms to "ensure that the voices of all relevant stakeholders [...] are heard."⁶⁸ In this spirit of expansion and inclusiveness already at the core of the Reform Document, new mechanisms either 'structured' (i.e. following the layout of the existing ones) or 'soft' (clusters of like-minded constituencies) beyond those referred to in paragraph 26 may include:
- a. *Legal and juridical organizations.* A mechanism/cluster would bring together international and regional entities that deal with legal and juridical affairs⁶⁹, to interact with CFS with a view to provide their relevant expertise and technical support for *ex ante* processes as well as for the eventual incorporation of policy products into national, regional and global frameworks.⁷⁰
 - b. *Media organizations.* CFS is the 'best kept secret' among policymakers and the committee's potential participants and benefactors. There is a substantial asymmetry between the grand description of CFS as "the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform for all stakeholders to work together to ensure food security and nutrition for all"⁷¹ and the level of

⁶⁴ The Chair has been following up on these opportunities, looking at incorporating other actors beyond the Gates Foundation (which recently established a Rome-based unit for facilitating a closer working relationship with CFS).

⁶⁵ See paragraph 26b of this non-paper for a clear example of how like-minded or similar-natured entities can make meaningful contributions through a 'soft' arrangement.

⁶⁶ Reform Document, paragraph 17.

⁶⁷ Ibid, outlined in paragraph 3 and spelled out in more detail in paragraph 6.

⁶⁸ Ibid, paragraph 7.

⁶⁹ Such as the Rome-based International Development Law Organization, the Milan Center for Food Law and Policy, etc.

⁷⁰ This is an idea originally put forth by the Italian delegation. While a discussion on the relative usefulness of advice at global or regional *versus* at national level may be constructive, the fact remains that the ultimate goal of CFS outcomes is to present authorities with recommendations and voluntary guidelines that could be easily incorporated into actual, concrete and actionable policies.

⁷¹ <http://www.fao.org/cfs/en/> (CFS website).

knowledge about CFS: an alarming number of individuals and entities that should be our natural partners as actors and stakeholders at national, regional and global levels have never heard of the Committee on World Food Security. A mechanism/cluster would include international and national press agencies, media groups and aggregators, opinion connectors/influencers, etc., perhaps including the communication units of the Rome-based agencies, to advise, perhaps on a needs basis, on [i] customary and innovative ways to approach CFS and its work in order to garner an ever growing audience, and [ii] to help disseminate appropriate and updated information about the existence and the possibilities/capabilities of CFS, its policy products, the ongoing workstreams and research tasks, etc., so as to amplify its global profile and influence in policy-making networks/scenarios.

- c. *Academia.* A mechanism/cluster for academic and educational organizations, including universities, technical institutes, vocational schools, think tanks, associations of professors, lecturers, researchers, students and alumni, etc. would bring to CFS a large, currently untapped wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm. CFS should harness the growing number of universities and other institutions of higher learning all over the world whose curricula cover issues of direct interest for CFS, as well as the faculty, students and alumni that could collaborate at many levels/stages.⁷²
- d. *Action-oriented organizations.* There are considerable sources of goodwill and networking in service/voluntary associations whose mandate may not be directly linked to issues of food security and nutrition, which can help CFS open doors, amplify impact and catalytic investments, give a hand in resource mobilization, etc. Coalescing into a mechanism/cluster, these entities would provide powerful worldwide, regional and national networks for nudging authorities and stakeholders at all levels into paying more attention to CFS outcomes, and also providing a reinforcing capacity for creating/sustaining impact on the ground both at country and at local level.⁷³
- e. *Faith-based organizations.* While these structures could well fit into the previous structure (action-oriented), there is a strong case for a mechanism/cluster that would bring together relevant actors cutting across individual countries, regions and the world stage, with seamless/direct linkages between other mechanisms/clusters and with actors on the ground. It is common knowledge that the realm of food security and nutrition has a long and fruitful experience in partnering with faith-based entities, including recent success stories lead by WFP.
- f. *Regional intergovernmental organizations.* Since the CFS reform process, several regional and sub-regional Secretariats have been established (and continue to be instituted) to facilitate and coordinate social policies, while connecting medium- and high-level decision makers in areas directly linked to the CFS mandate.⁷⁴
- g. *Parliamentarians.* National and regional caucuses and alliances of legislators committed to inclusive, cross-party collaboration for visualizing, studying comparative solutions, drafting/proposing, debating, eventually approving (and later applying lessons learned and

⁷² Universities from the Dominican Republic, Italy, Mexico, Spain and the United States, among many other countries, are constantly approaching the Chair to express their eagerness to contribute to CFS on various capacities.

⁷³ The Chair has initiated contacts with the Millennium Challenge Corporation and other like-minded entities, and foresees an interest from societies such as Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis, etc.

⁷⁴ One such entity, the Social Secretariat for the Central American Integration System (SISCA/SICA), is in contact with the Chair in this regard.

adjusting) principles, laws and regulations related to food security, nutrition and surrounding aspects took off concurrently to the global crisis that triggered CFS reform. A mechanism/cluster where CFS could interact with members of national and regional parliaments partaking in their own FSN platforms would go a long way to create/strengthen much needed reciprocal support.⁷⁵

- h. Innovators. A mechanism/cluster would bring together a new type of entrepreneur for ascertaining shifting areas of maximum impact, bridging the conventional configurations in food security and nutrition. These actors are nimbly moving across a range of fields, linking both developed and emerging markets as well as producers and consumers, as they create innovative processes and identify existing opportunities in food security and nutrition, thereby bringing fresh concepts, creative energy and pioneering engagements to CFS.⁷⁶*
- i. Friends of CFS. A catch-all mechanism/cluster for individuals/entities whose core mandate may not be directly related to FSN would provide general support for CFS to assist/sponsor specific issues or workstreams, including advocacy, visibility, human and/or financial resource mobilization, procurement and adequate investment of political capital, etc. These would be people and institutions wishing to make a difference in a world where inequality and injustice too often and too easily take the form of hunger and malnutrition, and the suffering they cause.⁷⁷*
29. *Because of their close relationship with all aspects of CFS and the crucial importance of the contributions they make to its policy products, the HLPE⁷⁸ and its active Project Teams⁷⁹ should belong in the Advisory Group.*
30. *Regarding the number of Advisory Group seats, the reasoning heard from many members and stakeholders—cognizant of the fact that ascribing political status to seat allocation has been a source of incessant bickering and conflict, and is the essential reason why other issues surrounding the Advisory Group have yet to be discussed and resolved—persuades the CFS Chair that ‘a fixed number is not relevant.’⁸⁰ Recalling paragraphs 7c and 24-25 of this non-paper, much time and energy have been lost in juggling possible seat allocations for fleeting/capricious purposes while [a] allotted spaces have remained empty or underused for years, and [b] actors that could add real value, including some of those enumerated in paragraphs 26 and 28, remain sidelined.*
31. *Mindful of the institutional craving for certainty and trying to foresee future needs, the CFS Chair believes that the Bureau could find it useful to agree and submit to plenary⁸¹ a sensu lato*

⁷⁵ To this end, the Chair is receiving enquiries from his own country’s *Frente parlamentario contra el hambre* [Parliamentary Front Against Hunger], as well as a formal approach from the Andean Parliament and informal queries from the Central American Parliament.

⁷⁶ The Chair has been invited to observe a Munich-based workshop for incubators co-run by WFP, and attended the Global Agripreneurs Summit held in Istanbul on 16 April 2018 (accepting an invitation from Future Agro Challenge).

⁷⁷ A growing number of individuals and organizations are approaching the Chair to seek “a way in,” dismayed by obstacles arising from a narrow interpretation of the categories laid out in the Reform Document.

⁷⁸ Representation would be the responsibility of the Chair, Vice-Chair, or other member(s) of the HLPE Steering Committee.

⁷⁹ Representation would be the responsibility of the Coordinator(s) or other member(s) of the Project Teams.

⁸⁰ This is a constant refrain heard at the ‘Friends of the CFS Chair’ meeting referred to in paragraph 13b and note

31. See notes 83-84.

⁸¹ At the 45th CFS session in October 2018.

interpretation⁸² so that the number of Advisory Group seats is elevated to twenty-five⁸³, subject to review after a reasonable period of time. It would be understood that each mechanism, regardless of the number of its constituent parts and potential speakers, would have one ‘seat’ each (e.g., in the spirit of inclusiveness and flexibility, the UN mechanism spelled out in paragraph 26a would have one seat, even as the floor is given to FAO, IFAD, WFP, WHO, UNSCN, and any number of UN agencies)⁸⁴.

32. *At the end of the day, the Bureau’s ‘invisible hand’ of wisdom will welcome (or dismiss) the voices of ‘structured’ or ‘soft’ mechanisms/clusters according to the relevance of their actual contributions. The Bureau should ultimately decide, through the concrete inputs received in inclusiveness, flexibility, openness and transparency (i.e., without segregation, prejudice, reticence or opacity) if the messengers delivering such inputs are worthy of its time and attention.*

Next steps

33. *The Bureau is expected to [a] finalize discussions on Advisory Group improvement, and [b] appoint an Advisory Group for the remainder of the current biennium (i.e., until October 2019) by 23 July 2018.*

⁸² This is the usually favored method for legal interpretation in multilateral fora, including the Rome-based agencies. For example, at the outset of all Bureau meetings held during the current biennium, the Chair has submitted, to unanimous agreement, that alternate members should be allowed to speak, which is the only practical difference between the two ‘categories’ of Bureau members (a more in-depth discussion on the legal and the political responsibilities of the 24 delegations elected to the Bureau is pending).

⁸³ This number is the sum of Bureau members (12), alternate Bureau members (12) and the Chair. Ultimately, as indicated elsewhere in this non-paper, the arithmetic of Advisory Group membership should not be an end in itself, but a means for accomplishing the goals of CFS through the principles of inclusiveness, flexibility, openness and transparency.

⁸⁴ The purpose of this idea, i.e. having a grand total of 25 seats (a number larger than the sum of the two initial mechanisms plus the roughly dozen ‘structured’ and/or ‘soft’ mechanisms/clusters suggested above) serves to underline the need for inclusiveness and flexibility, while maintaining a consistent rationale for establishing a ‘fixed’ number —which, again, is not really relevant. A definitive number, whatever the logic for coming up with it, could be lower or higher: what is important is to break the narrow-minded and the inward-looking approaches that have blocked discussions and decisions on how the Advisory Group can better serve CFS.