

Dear CFS Bureau and Advisory Group members,

We are writing as the Youth Working Group of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM) to express our surprise and concern at the request of a newly formed Youth Council to the Rome-Based Agencies (RBAs) to join the CFS Advisory Group.

The Youth Working Group of the CSM gathers smallholders and family farmers, Indigenous Peoples, fisherfolk, agricultural and food workers, women, landless, consumers, pastoralists, urban food insecure and NGOs from around the globe, through our national and global organisations. The CSM Youth Constituency and Working Group are a strong advocate for youth engagement in the CFS. We are thrilled that the CFS is now working towards a policy convergence process on Promoting Youth Employment and Engagement in Agriculture and Food Systems. We were delighted that youth were given a key role in CFS 46. In the lead up to the Plenary week, PSM and CSM youth successfully designed the Youth Side Event that took place during the last day of the CFS. During that occasion, we demonstrated our capacity to work constructively together to contribute to CFS policy dialogues.

At the Youth Side Event, a representative from the PSM mentioned an initiative to form a Youth Council to the RBAs. Since then we have communicated with the Council to better understand its objectives, scope and key principles. Our constituency has examined the Council's founding document, and we are worried about its limited framing regarding youth identity, its failure to centre human rights principles, and its narrow focus on entrepreneurialism and innovation. We are disheartened and alarmed by the Council's process of construction, which was led by youth organizations of the PSM, despite its statement of inclusivity. In a recent letter to the Youth Council, we expressed our concern that the process to create this Council was neither participatory, inclusive, nor transparent. Although we worked closely with youth from the PSM throughout 2019 to co-create the CFS Youth side event, youth from civil society organizations and social movements participating in the CSM were not directly informed about the initiative, nor invited to attend the multiple consultations used to form the Council.

Although we have now been invited to participate in the proposed Council, there remains a lack of clarity about what in fact we would be participating in at this late stage in the Council's development. We do not know its vision for food systems, its governance principles, or if it has processes to ensure coherence with the core aims of the CFS. In addition, we question why youth of the PSM have decided to form such a council and apply for a seat on the CFS Advisory Group, when youth already have established mechanisms for participation in CFS work – the CSM and PSM. Rather than establish an additional body without an inclusive process or coherent aims, we believe the focus should be on strengthening youth participation in our respective mechanisms and in the CFS. We, as civil society youth have shown that we can speak for ourselves, thereby ensuring that a diversity of youth perspectives are voiced and heard. The CFS must safeguard that this stays possible in the future.

To this end, we propose a Special Session of the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group on Youth Engagement in the CFS. This would create a space to hear the perspectives of a diversity of youth and their organisations on the upcoming CFS workstream on youth, but also how we want to be involved in current CFS processes and the CFS structure, including the Plenary and the Advisory Group. Potential discussion points for this Special Session could be oriented to the current policy process on Agroecological Approaches and Other Innovations; to the upcoming policy workstream on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; or the framework of discussion related to the upcoming UN Food Systems Summit. This Special

Session could include youth constituencies of the CSM and PSM, but also youth researchers from CGIAR and youth staff experts from the RBAs.

The CSM Youth remain committed to continuing our active engagement in CFS events and activities. We are also open to further reply to any questions or doubts from Bureau members, and we welcome any further discussion on youth topics.

Best Regards/Sincerely,

CSM Youth Working Group

17 April 2020