

CSM contributions to CFS AG-Bureau meeting 2 June 2020

Agenda item 1: Option paper – CFS 47 contingency plan

CSM appreciates the option paper which outlines three scenarios for the next CFS plenary. When assessing them, we took into account the following three key considerations:

- Participation: a CFS plenary calls for the highest degree of possible attendance. This is a difficult guess in these times of the pandemic, but it seems more likely, for now, that travel restrictions will continue to be strong in the next 3-4 months, as the pandemic is still increasing in some parts of the world. With all caution to unexpected developments, we can consider that a CFS Plenary in the first quarter of 2021 might be higher attended than a Plenary in October 2020.
- Accomplishment: The CFS 47 plenary should allow to conclude the two ongoing policy workstreams with the approval of the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, and the Policy recommendations on agroecological and other innovative approaches. For now, it seems more likely that these processes can be finished by the end of this year than by the end of July. In line with the MYPOW, the first steps for the next workstream on Gender equality and women's empowerment can be taken in November and December without a new CFS Plenary mandate. A Plenary in early 2021 would not imply any delay with the MYPOW.
- The period assigned so far for October 2020 could still be used for major CFS events, as the option paper describes for Scenario C. The focus of these events should be sharing and discussing policy responses to the Food Security and Nutrition dimension of the COVID-19 crisis, with high-level virtual participation from capitals, the UN and all constituencies.

Optimistically, we could still hope to have a well participated CFS Plenary in October 2020. However, it does not seem realistic at this stage. Based on these considerations, we support the Scenario 3 option for a CFS Plenary 47 in the first quarter of 2021 and suggest a priority to be given to the Policy responses to the COVID-19 FSN crisis for the Virtual CFS discussions in October 2020.

Agenda item 2: CFS Response to the Covid-19

CSM appreciates that the presented proposal clearly shows that the three Strategic Objectives of the CFS in terms of platform, policy convergence and uptake can be linked to the short-term as well as to the mid-long-term responses to the food security and nutrition crisis accompanying Covid-19.

On the Platform function, which is more for the short-term response, it is fundamental to give space to the constituencies of the most affected. The CFS can give space to the youth constituencies which are now among the most affected by the massive lay-off of workers all over the world, as the ILO reported last week. The CSM Youth constituency will gather next week to assess impacts and to discuss youth responses to this crisis. A dedicated space for youth to share their experiences could be scheduled within one of the upcoming CFS Advisory Group and Bureau meetings. The Women constituency of the CSM held a consultation with moving testimonies from all regions, underscoring the terrible urgency of the crisis, but also their struggles, solidarity and resilience strategies. The new UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has started a worldwide consultation. Let's use the CFS as a platform where we can hear from them!

Our suggestion for change in this document focuses on the second Strategic Objective, the policy convergence function which is more directed to the mid- and long-term response. Many members and participants at the last CFS Bureau and Advisory Group, including us, strongly supported a process for a policy response from the CFS to this crisis. It is important but not enough to gather and exchange all the relevant information - we need to do something substantial with it in terms of CFS policy guidance on the pandemic. It is important but not enough to include some lessons learned from this crisis in the ongoing policy processes on food systems and nutrition and agroecological and other approaches.

As was also said by others during the last meetings, the CFS needs to provide a policy response to this unprecedented crisis. In this sense, the option paper falls short in formulating what could be a policy process building on the HLPE report on the Global Narrative on FSN which is already part of the MYPOW and which, as explained by the HLPE Chair at the last meeting, would include the COVID-19 dimension in its content and recommendations.

The Friends of the Chair Group, which was welcomed by the Chair at the last meeting and which received broad support, should take this essential policy response forward quickly.

To advance the work, we would suggest that the CFS Chair and Bureau members take into consideration the possibility of holding an additional meeting of the AG and Bureau between now and the one scheduled only for the end of July. Maybe it could be held at the end of June or the beginning of July.

Within the CSM, we have started discussing proposals for such a process, which we are happy to share in this meeting if the Chair and members and participants are interested in hearing it. We can submit the more detailed document in writing after this meeting but can share the basic thoughts with you also just now.

➤ See Annex below

Agenda item 3: Option paper negotiations

Regarding the Option paper on CFS negotiations: we share the view of many members and participants that in-person negotiations are fundamental for the quality and legitimacy of CFS convergence processes and outcomes. Therefore, we do not support option C for virtual negotiations.

However, with the pandemic still heading towards its peak in several regions, and the continued uncertainty about travel restrictions prevailing, it seems **necessary to think about formats which ensure a high physical participation in combination with additional virtual participation**.

Regarding physical participation in face-to face negotiations, several factors need to be taken into account:

- Time: in-person participation in the next few months would be very low; we already know now that some regions could not travel to Italy until the end of September. The probability of a better level of participation is likely to be higher in the last quarter of the year.

- Accomplishment: even if the two ongoing CFS policy processes need more time than foreseen, this should not lead to a delay of the MYPOW.
- Who can take part? it is important that the CFS policy negotiations are not exclusively conducted by the Rome representatives of members and participants. Everything should be done to facilitate the participation from constituencies and members from outside Rome, although we acknowledge that participation will still be limited.
- Number of participants: an analysis needs to be done regarding room capacity in order to comply with UN rules on physical distancing. The UN standard applied in Geneva foresees that two seats between delegates must remain unoccupied; no one will be permitted to sit in the row behind the main seats; entrances into and out of the room must remain clear of people.

If these rules were applied to the Red Room (with a normal capacity of 455 seats), certainly the maximum number of participants can be above 100 persons. For the FAO plenary hall (with more than 1000 seats normally) the maximum would be much higher.

Of course, these rules and room capacities need to be defined by the Rome-based Agencies in line with the general indications for meetings set by the Italian government. In due course, it is more likely that in-person participation in negotiations can be increased over time.

Therefore, we would express our support for further exploring Option B, that of physical negotiations with limited participation under the following conditions:

- such negotiations should not be conducted before the end of September but rather scheduled for the last quarter of the year, in order to reach the highest participation possible and to ensure the implementation of the MYPOW;
- a maximum number of only 37 participants would not be acceptable for an inclusive discussion; at least 80 to 100 persons should be able to participate physically in the room;
- the video-conferencing facilities should be easily accessible to many others to allow for remote attendance in the negotiations, with the possibility to participate actively.
- Full-day meetings should not be considered but rather 3-hour meetings which would allow broader participation from different time-zones.

In our view, the CFS needs more than possible rules for virtual negotiations. The CFS can exercise leadership in innovating governance institutions if it remains committed to its norms of participation, transparency and inclusiveness also in this virtual period.

Among these applied standards for the virtual period should be:

- Scheduling of meetings:
 - o it would be important to establish an adjusted meeting schedule for the CFS for the next five or six months;
 - o for the next months, we suggest that new meetings be announced with an anticipation of not less than 3 weeks, if possible.
- Languages and background document to meetings:
 - o We should come back to the practice in CFS that background documents to meetings are circulated at least 2 weeks in advance, to give time for consultation which also includes translation in our case.

- Documents for negotiation should be provided in all six UN languages and circulated at least 4 weeks before negotiations start.
- We kindly ask that the interpretation function of the zoom platform being activated by default for all CFS meetings as it has always been for all in-person meetings, as we usually have to ensure inclusiveness through our own, self-funded interpretation.
- Consideration of time-zones:
 - There is no perfect time during the day that allows all time-zones to participate. However, if meetings are not scheduled in the traditional way (3 hours in the morning, 3-hour in the afternoon, Rome time) an increased participation can be reached. Meetings held between 14-16h Rome time are accessible for many more people ranging from the Americas to Asia.
 - The proposal to record the meetings, as suggested by Costa Rica last week for the OEWG on food systems and nutrition should be applied to all CFS meetings, including AG-Bureau meetings. If these recordings are made accessible on the CFS website, this could allow participants from other time zones to fully take note of the proceedings as they happened.
- Virtual CFS events:
 - The CFS, with its unique standards of participation, transparency and inclusiveness, can show to other governance platforms that these standards are applicable also in the virtual context. Future virtual events organized by the CFS should apply these standards: the respective concept notes, agenda and composition of panels should be developed and consulted with the Advisory Group and approved by the CFS Bureau, with support from the CFS Secretariat.
- Connectivity:
 - Many of the people who are working in rural areas have weaker connectivity than the colleagues in Rome. We always need to make sure that they can participate actively in the virtual discussions. In our CSM experience, this requires a special sensitivity and proactive comprehension, sometimes also more time and patience for listening to participants for a second time, or to invite them to write in the zoom chat.
 - Additional support should be explored to simply ensure the access to a functional internet of representatives from rural areas and regions without a stable internet connection.

Annex:

**Potential process for developing and using a global policy response to Covid in the CFS.
Input to 2 June AG/Bureau meeting**

The process will operate within the SOs as defined in the MYPOW:

1. SO1: exchange and assess evidence from MSs, participants and other relevant actors, providing guidance for short-term responses to the Covid 19 pandemic.
2. SO2: building on the above and on the work of the HLPE, develop medium and long-term global policy guidance responding to the Covid 19 pandemic.

3. SO3: develop an innovative tool to monitor food system and nutrition crises and promote the use and monitoring of the Covid policy guidance and other relevant CFS policy outcomes.

It will draw on already planned inputs without occasioning additions to the MYPow:

- The HLPE 'narratives' report, which will draw lessons from the Covid pandemic, and the updated Covid issues paper will provide a solid basis of analysis and recommendations for a policy convergence process in the CFS.
- The collection of first-hand evidence in the CFS (SO1 above) will feed into the process of updating the HLPE issues paper and will accompany the successive phases of policy convergence.

Outcomes:

- The October 2020 CFS events to include a two-day Extraordinary Session with participation by ministers and most affected constituencies, to testify to the CFS's proactive attention to the pandemic. The guidance provided would acknowledge the evolving nature of the situation and incorporate a monitoring process to track evolutions and update the guidance accordingly.
- For the longer term, CFS 47 would mandate development of a framework for monitoring the emergence of future crises and policy guidance on how to seek to prevent them.
- Integration of the covid issues into current and future workstreams of the MYPow to be assured.

Process:

- FOC finalizes a proposal for discussion in the AG/Bureau and adoption by Bureau. An extra meeting in late June/early July should be scheduled to discuss it and name a facilitator.
- Virtual discussions among MSs, CSM, PSM and other CFS participants structured around the recommendations of the HLPE reports, ensuring balanced regional participation.
- HLPE prepares updated recommendations taking the above into account.
- Based on HLPE recommendations, the facilitator, assisted by a TT including CSM, PSM and the RBAs, prepares a draft document/decision box for discussion during the High-Level event in October 2020/CFS47. To be reviewed by AG/Bureau, and by a once-off OEWS if in-presence meetings are possible.
- Global policy response to Covid to be systematically brought to bear on on-going and future CFS workstreams and plan to be prepared to promote uptake of Covid policy response and other relevant CFS policy outcomes.

Calendar/timeline

- Depending on scheduling of CFS 47 and on the possibility to have in presence negotiations