

## CFS POLICY CONVERGENCE PROCESSES

### PROPOSAL ON FORMAT AND MODALITIES FOR NEGOTIATIONS

#### INTRODUCTION

This proposal regarding the negotiations of the two ongoing CFS policy convergence processes is based on the discussions held between the Bureau and Advisory Group on 2 June, and reflects the outcomes of the Bureau meeting that took place on 5 June.

Bureau and Advisory Group discussions were informed by an options paper prepared by the CFS Secretariat that presented different scenarios to ensure the finalization of the two policy products by the end of 2020, in advance of the UN Food Systems Summit.

Following the meeting with its Advisory Group, the CFS Bureau expressed its *“preference for a revised and more inclusive version of Option B, which foresees a revised quota proposal to allow participation of one participant per delegation”*.

In order to facilitate an informed decision, *“the CFS Secretariat was requested to check with FAO the feasibility of holding physical meetings in July in FAO or WFP Headquarters with a larger number of people than the original proposal, and to present an updated proposal”*.

Lastly, *“some Bureau members reiterated the need to reconsider the possibility to start with virtual negotiations, in case physical meetings are not allowed for a long time, bearing in mind the importance of finalizing the two policy instruments by the end of 2020. However, some Bureau members opposed virtual negotiations, which they believe would not ensure inclusivity”*.

The CFS Bureau is expected to take decisions on 24 June, after consultations with its Advisory Group, on format, dates, and modalities for negotiations.

#### I. FORMAT AND DATES OF NEGOTIATIONS

The updated proposal on format of negotiations, based on the outcomes of the Bureau meeting held on 5 June, would allow for a highly representative group to be present with the OEWG Chair/Rapporteur in one of FAO's (or IFAD or WFP's) larger meeting rooms (under clearly detailed health/safety rules and protocols), with others following “virtually” by digital means. The following represents a proposed format and procedure for this option (for which senior management approval would be required):

- a) “Physical negotiations” would take place in one of the RBA Headquarters (Rome), as soon as physical meetings of non-staff guests is permitted, with a reduced number of participants representing the range of CFS stakeholders and constituencies;

- b) Each CFS Member and CFS Participant constituency would be asked to designate spokespersons who will participate in negotiations, presenting previously-agreed and defined positions and proposals, and with the mandate to negotiate on behalf of their countries and/or constituencies;
- c) Each CFS Member will be asked to nominate its delegate and communicate his/her name to the CFS Secretariat in advance of the negotiations.
- d) The five CFS Participant categories established in the CFS Reform Document (paragraph 11) will be represented as follows:
  - i) *UN bodies*: FAO, WFP, IFAD, WHO, UNN, and UNICEF (one delegate each);
  - ii) *Civil society organizations*: the Civil Society Mechanism, CSM (one delegate);
  - iii) *Private sector and philanthropic foundations*: Private Sector Mechanism (PSM) and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (one delegate each);
  - iv) *International Agricultural Research System*: CGIAR (one delegate);
  - v) *International Financial Institutions*: the World Bank (one delegate);
- e) While no silent observers will be allowed in the meeting room, sessions will be webcast in order for interested stakeholders to follow remotely;
- f) In this regard, CFS Members and CFS Participant Constituencies would establish their own internal coordination systems to ensure active communications during the negotiations between spokespersons and stakeholders following remotely;
- g) Virtual calls will be organized by the OEWG Chair/Rapporteur and the CFS Secretariat in advance of the negotiations to brief delegations on established rules and procedures, help them familiarize with the process, and respond to any questions.

This proposal foresees physical participation of a maximum number of people between 70 and 90.

Decisions concerning dates for document negotiations is closely linked to whether the proposed format of physical negotiations (with the participation of approximately 70-90 delegates) will be allowed in FAO and/or WFP or IFAD Headquarters in the near future.

With regards to the Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems for Nutrition (VGFSyN), for which a negotiation document was circulated on 16 March (language versions were made available in early April), the first round of negotiations remains scheduled for 20-24 July, pending Bureau debate and decisions.

At the moment, CFS has no confirmation from any of the three RBAs regarding when (and whether) physical meetings – even with reduced participation – will be allowed. Informal indications suggest that, at the earliest, in-person meetings will not commence before September.

Based upon the unanimous recognition of the importance of finalizing the two policy products by the end of this year, a small number of available slots in the joint RBA calendar for alternative “negotiation weeks”, the positive precedent established by the FAO Programme Committee and input from Bureau members during previous discussions, it may be most expedient to consider a “phased approach” – that is, starting with “virtual negotiations” as soon as feasible, continuing with “hybrid negotiations” when permissible, and concluding with “in-person, physical” negotiations, as soon as these are allowed. For the VGFSyN process, such an approach would mean holding the first round of fully virtual negotiations from 20 to 24 July.

## II. MODALITIES FOR NEGOTIATIONS

The process will build on the experience of previous CFS policy convergence processes and follow standard CFS Rules of Procedure. It will be facilitated by the OEWG Chair/Rapporteur with the support of the CFS Secretariat. Should any part of the negotiation process take place “virtually,” the process Chair/Rapporteur will manage each process consistent with the approach described below, with daily plenary sessions, with interpretation, with a working document visible to all participants as it is edited, and regular breaks for groups and constituents to conduct side-bar discussions.

The proposed modalities for (in-person) debate are as follows:

- a) In the interests of time and efficiency, the OEWG Chair/Rapporteur may place limits on the time available for interventions, and or indicate the number of interventions that will be heard before sharing a Chair’s/Rapporteur’s response or proposal;
- b) CFS stakeholders are asked to refrain from making lengthy opening or general statements. Inputs should be focused on substantive topics or issues where amendments are requested. Interventions should contain concrete text proposals, and concise clarifications of their rationale/meaning;
- c) Regional Groups and Participant constituencies are strongly invited to form collective positions, where possible;
- d) Proposals from Participants that do not find Member state support, will not be further considered;
- e) Based on interventions, a Chair’s/Rapporteur’s proposal will be formulated and projected on the screen, for which the Chair/Rapporteur will seek agreement;
- f) Absent agreement, the Chair/Rapporteur will call for one additional round of focused interventions, after which a new Chair’s/Rapporteur’s proposal will be formulated and presented;
- g) If no agreement is reached after this second round, the Chair/Rapporteur may request bilateral or small-group discussions, and if/when appropriate may call for a Friends of the Chair/Rapporteur discussion to resolve outstanding issues. Such discussions would be held either over lunch time or after the plenary session;
- h) There will be two sessions each day (9.30-12.30 and 14.30-17.30) and, if needed, the OEWG Chair/Rapporteur may decide to continue the session into the evening. Pending the availability of interpreters, the sessions will be interpreted in the six official FAO languages (English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, and Russian);
- i) All delegations are encouraged to be ready to reach consensus on the policy documents to be presented in plenary for final endorsement.