



CSM Letter to the CFS Chair on Food Systems Summit

Amb. Thanawat Tiensin

Chair, UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS)

Rome, 9 February 2021

Dear Chair,

Kind regards from the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism for relations with the CFS.

We would like to continue our dialogue with you on the Food Systems Summit. We highly appreciate that you have been truly open and interested in listening to our growing concerns regarding the Summit process since you commenced your mandate as Chair of CFS in October 2019. We also acknowledge that you conveyed our key concerns to the Special Envoy and the Food Systems Summit Secretariat, including in the context of the exchange of letters between the CFS and FSS in November 2020.

We will not repeat the concerns expressed in earlier occasions, such as through [the Open Call of Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' organizations to respond to the FSS](#), as presented during the CFS Special event in October 2020, and the [CSM Statement to the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group meeting in November 2020](#). These criticisms continue to be valid, particularly regarding the worries about undue corporate influence in the Summit preparation; the missing human rights grounding; the lack of emphasis on the true extent of the transformation that the corporate food systems need to undergo to re-align with the utmost imperatives of people, peoples and planet; the threat of democratic public institutions and inclusive multilateralism being undermined by multistakeholderism.

In this letter, we would like to respond to the question on the conditions under which the CSM could be involved in the Summit process. As we have said on previous occasions: the CSM cannot jump onto a train that is heading in the wrong direction. Therefore, the general conditions for our possible involvement relate to whether the leading decision-making bodies of the Summit are willing to seriously address our deep concerns through a substantial and radical re-direction of the Summit's current course. In this respect, it is essential that critical progress takes place in the following domains:

Shifting away from corporate capture and re-grounding in individual and collective Human Rights and the experiences and knowledge of the people and Indigenous Peoples most affected:

- The UN Secretary General should finally accept the request for a meeting with social movements and Indigenous Peoples' leaders on the matter of the FSS, as solicited with the [letter signed by over 550 organizations in March 2020](#);
- The UN Secretary General should express his willingness to reassess and withdraw from the Strategic Partnership Agreement with the World Economic Forum and re-prioritize the voices of the most marginalized and vulnerable food producers and consumers;
- The UN Secretary General should establish robust safeguards against conflict of interest (COI) in all bodies and processes of the FSS, to ensure the centrality of public interests over private ones. This would include mandatory COI declarations from all members of these bodies (Scientific Group, Advisory Committee, Champions Group, Action Tracks) to transparently expose the full map of existing conflicts of interests and enable adequate corrective actions;

- The decision-making bodies of the FSS process, particularly the UNSG, the Advisory Committee and the FSS Special Envoy, should reaffirm that human rights should be the core foundational pillar of food systems, and therefore of the FSS, ensuring that analysis and policy recommendations of all Action Tracks be grounded in rights-based approaches and aim to promote and facilitate the full realization of all human rights.

Transformation of corporate food systems:

- The fundamental premise of the Summit should be that of fostering a holistic and systemic approach that recognises the multidimensional nature of food (social, economic, ecological, cultural and political), asserts food sovereignty (the right of Peoples, nations and states to define their own food systems) and reclaims food systems as public commons that cannot be left to market-based solutions: not only does this require full peoples' participation and sovereignty, but it also places the wellbeing of people, peoples and the planet at the centre. This imposes the stringent regulations of the corporate food system to tackle its predatory and expansionary nature and realign it with urgent social, economic, cultural and ecological imperatives;
- To respond to this urgent need and reverse the corporate capture of food systems, an additional action track should be established, as part of the formal FSS process, to focus on the transformation of corporate food systems, and the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism should be leading its proceedings, in collaboration with relevant UN bodies and governments, including cross-cutting implications across the other Action Tracks;
- It remains understood that the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism will continue to autonomously organize its own independent process to respond beyond the formal boundaries of the FSS and will generate its own independent outcomes on strategies and pathways to transform corporate food systems.

Defending democratic public institutions and inclusive multilateralism:

- The UN Secretary General should publicly commit to ensuring that the FSS and its outcomes will strengthen human rights-based governance of food systems on all levels, which assigns clear responsibilities and obligations to states as duty bearers, the people as rights holders, including Indigenous Peoples, and a dramatically reduced role to the private and corporate sector, in accordance with its function as third party under international human rights law.
- In this context, the UN Secretary General and Member States should also underline the importance of a democratic multilateral system, including the CFS and the Rome-Based Agencies for the governance of food. The FSS must strengthen, and in no way undermine, weaken or substitute the CFS or its components, particularly the independence of the High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) and the autonomy of civil society and Indigenous Peoples' participation in this foremost inclusive intergovernmental and international global platform for food security and nutrition.

We respectfully request that you share this letter with the UN Secretary General, the Principles of FAO, IFAD and WFP, the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights, the Special Envoy and Secretariat of the Food Systems Summit, and the members of the CFS Bureau and Advisory Group. We would also request you to make this letter available on the CFS Website, in the context of the Exchange of Letters between the CFS and the FSS, for public information.

With our highest appreciation,

The Coordination Committee of the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism for relations with the CFS