

CSIPM Statement during the Bureau and Advisory Group meeting, 19th December 2023

Since 27 November the CSIPM has been unable to guarantee the minimum conditions for its work, due to a drastic financial crisis that has been building up since the month of May. The cash flow gap has now become so severe that it impedes us from organizing not only our participation in CFS activities but also our preparations for such participation, which requires reiterated multilingual and multi-regional exchange to develop positions and collect evidence that reflects the needs and proposals of those whose right to food is most endangered.

It is with deep regret that we come here today to communicate this acute difficulty and to let you know that we did not have the basic conditions to prepare our contribution to this very important meeting. We remain confident that the situation can be resolved and are making all the efforts we can to contribute to achieving this objective as soon as possible, so that we can resume the CSIPM's facilitation of the voices of those most affected by hunger and malnutrition in the CFS, the foremost inclusive intergovernmental platform for food security and nutrition.

The situation in which the CSIPM finds itself is caused principally by the non-receipt of a substantial grant from the EU, channeled through IFAD, for CSIPM activities for the years 2023, 2024, 2025 and part of 2026. This contribution, part of a multi-year grant to the CFS Secretariat, the HLPE and the CSIPM, was already approved by the EU in December 2022.

In order to function during the year of 2023, the CSIPM was authorized by the EU to spend the funds from May 1st 2023 on the basis of the grant that had been approved by the EU (even though the funds had not yet been transferred). So far, the CSIPM and its participating organizations have advanced more than €100,000 to cover interpretation services, translation services, organisation of preparatory meetings and consultations, flights and hotel accommodation for participating CSO and IP representatives in Rome and the CSIPM secretariat's salaries over the course of 2023.

Only on 16 November, were we informed by IFAD that the budget presented by the CSIPM would not meet all of the eligibility criteria for EU funding under the terms of a recent manual of whose existence we were not aware. Coming at the end of the year, after five months of advance payments, this communication has put the CSIPM in a vulnerable situation in terms of meeting new bureaucratic requirements that do not acknowledge the functioning of the CSIPM and CFS, and to finalize the contract and enable the disbursement of the EU contribution before the closure of 2023. The CSIPM has reached the point in which its secretariat staff have been obliged to stop working because their contracts cannot be honored or renewed, outstanding payments to service providers cannot be made, and there are simply no funds available to meet even the most basic costs involved in the task of facilitation.

A more timely and continued communication between the EU, IFAD and the CSIPM, all part of the CFS, would have been key to avoid the emergency situation that the CSIPM is in currently. Although the process of signature of the contract which will enable disbursement has been underway since Friday, the reality hasn't changed much for us: at the end of the year and with substantial funds already advanced, the necessary conditions to ensure the CSIPM participation in the CFS are not present, and we still have no certainty on when the funds will concretely be made available.

The suspension of the facilitation of the CSIPM's participation in the CFS has been communicated to the new CFS Chair, Ambassador Nosipho Nausca-Jean Jezile. The CSIPM is also reaching out to all CFS Member States and participants to support immediate action by the EU and IFAD to solve this financial crisis and maintain the inclusiveness of the CFS.

We came to this meeting only to appeal to CFS Bureau members, as the executive arm of the CFS, but also to the CFS Secretariat and the Advisory Group, including the RBAs, to do all you can to resolve this urgent situation and to support our full commitment to continue participating within the CFS.

What is the CSIPM concretely requesting?

1. The CSIPM urgently requests that IFAD finds a modality to expedite the disbursement of the funds and commits to do it before the 31 of December.
2. We respectfully urge you to take the necessary action to support and defend this request and, by doing so, demonstrate your support for the CFS and for meaningful participation by organizations representing those most affected by food insecurity.
3. Finally, we request recognition that the bureaucratic tangle we have encountered has serious political consequences, and that we need to find ways to work in the future in a manner that is suited to the CFS's and CSIPM's realities and make it possible to ensure the sustained participation of the rights holders in this unique UN intergovernmental platform for achieving the right to food.

The full participation of rights-holders through the mechanism established for this purpose and the workers' rights of those working in the CSIPM secretariat are being undermined. If the funds are not disbursed by the end of the month, the situation of the CSIPM will be untenable. Therefore, we really count on your strong support.