Thank you Chair for giving us the floor. As we enter the last OEWG meeting before the negotiations reopen, let’s remember our enthusiasm and ambition back in 2017, when the CFS committed to having a policy process on gender. The debates we had in this space since then have only emphasized how crucial and imperative a CFS document on gender equality has become, especially considering the Covid-19 pandemic which has amplified gender-based discrimination and violence. The regional consultations brought to us the grounded evidence of these structural concerns, as did the previous rounds of negotiations. For us, Civil society and Indigenous People’s organizations, participating in this process, all that we have put into it so far, means a lot of commitment, not only in terms of time and financial resources, but also a huge amount of energy and emotional capacities. We are here because of our commitment to our communities, to society and to our planet. And we can only be here, because others are backing us up at home, and we carry their voices with us. What we bring to this process are firsthand experiences of what must be changed to achieve Gender Equality for a truly meaningful food secure world, in which all people realize their right to food.

What is at stake in this process is not a mere document, it is the rights of women and diversities to exist and not suffer violence. But what is becoming evident is that this is not a priority for many Member States.

For the CSIPM, to support these guidelines it is fundamental that we see the outcome responding to the needs on the ground, in order to achieve gender equality and equitable food systems. This is our duty to the millions of people from all continents and regions we are representing here.

We regret that many of the structural issues we have been discussing for more than two years, back since we were defining the ToRs for this process, have been lost in the present draft (be it patriarchal structures, sexual and gender-based violence, or extractivist models…). As a diverse group, our critique comes from a deep understanding of accommodating diverse and diverging views. However, what we see now in the draft is not diversity but an accommodation of different interests without coherence; a sprinkling of various combinations of ‘agreed’ language- which absolutely fails to capture our lived struggles.

We also noticed that some changes were lost in translation, which makes it more difficult to follow for non-English speakers (For example: the title of 3.9: is not the same in Spanish as in English, in Spanish “against women and girls” was not added).

We also cannot accept that at this stage, so many paragraphs that were agreed ad referendum have been re-opened, despite the large consensus among the MSs,
including yourself, Chair. Before entering negotiations, we need to have clarity on the way forward for this process, and the procedures that will be followed.

Another burning concern that we have is about the negative precedent that would be set within the CFS, if all the written comments received by your office to construct this draft, are not published in the workspace. Negotiations in the CFS have always strived for transparency, which is important to build trust and enable a truly participatory process. But without such transparency, we do not know who proposed what, and how we carry out discussions and move towards resolution of differences. Therefore, we strongly suggest that only those comments that are made public should be considered as legitimate contributions.

Sadly, and painfully, with every single new draft, the attempt to erase our existence, our identities, our lives, becomes even more obvious. We think that there is still time to change this, and we hope that the next round of negotiations will lead us in this direction. The final outcome will need to be evaluated by our WG. At the same time, we can already announce that we have started working on an autonomous guideline on gender equality, which truly intends to respond to the needs on the ground and fills lack of the current draft for negotiation. Dear State representatives, while you respond to pressures from your Capitals, remember you are ultimately representing your people, especially the ones who are most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition.

Let us(me) end by reiterating our slogan, We exist, we deserve equality, we deserve our rights.

Specific Aspects

2) Undermining Human rights

The CSIPM is alarmed by several additions to the text that question or qualify key components of the internationally negotiated and agreed UN human rights framework. The right to food is inextricably linked to other fundamental rights, and the CFS cannot operate disconnected from those rights. Human rights are applicable wherever human beings are and therefore also here in the CFS. The CFS cannot deny or ignore our rights. We exist and we demand our rights.

A clear example of this is in Paragraph 20 in particular, on the crucial principle of non-discrimination. The sentence

"The equal right of all persons to the enjoyment of all human rights"

in the previous version of the text is absolutely fundamental for an accurate understanding of the guiding principle of non-discrimination. This sentence follows directly Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and deleting or weakening it is a line that the CFS must not cross. The mention of the UDHR is equally
important [maybe mention OHCHR intervention if we speak after them]. Let’s remember that this year we are celebrating the 75th anniversary of the UDHR. It is shocking for us that a CFS document would undermine the UDHR. Therefore, the current formulation of the proposal is just not acceptable for the CSIPM.

Furthermore, the proposed change of “gender” to “sex” is incoherent with the guidelines. We are negotiating guidelines on “gender equality”, not on “sex equality”. Gender is not replaceable by sex, the first one is a social construct, while the second one is based only on physiological aspects of the human body. We do not understand why this paragraph has become contentious in the first place.

We are alarmed that some Member States can dare to undermine the non-discrimination principle in a body that is committed to uphold the right to food. Evidence of discrimination is the very reason why we embarked on the process of developing these guidelines. Women and girls, Indigenous women and girls, gender diverse persons are discriminated against, on a daily basis in numerous varying contexts. We suffer multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, violations and criminalization for the simple fact of existing, for being who we are and how we are. We experience them every time we cannot access land, each time we suffer sexual violence, when our wages, salaries and incomes are lower than those of men, when we don’t get access to education, when access to clean water and food are denied to us, when we are not allowed to organize, when others make decisions about our bodies.

Another issue of concern is Paragraph 23 on country ownership: While country ownership is an important principle for CFS Guidelines in general, and one that we have supported, it must never undermine the obligations of states in the international human rights framework. As we noted regarding para 17. The CFS has no mandate to question the normative authority of international human rights instruments and UNGA resolutions. The suggested addition of the term "country ownership in para 23 clearly limits the validity and applicability of international human rights standards. This is dangerous and generates an unacceptable antagonism between country ownership and the obligations of countries to international human rights standards. We do not accept these changes and request Member States also reject these proposed changes.

We also would like to draw your attention to paragraph 69.i in which tenure rights have been reduced to property rights. The VGGT, adopted by this very same body, shows clearly that access to land cannot be limited to property rights alone. This paragraph 69.i now also refers back to paras 20, 23 & 17, indicating that the principle of non-discrimination for land tenure is first limited to sex and not gender. Second, as it reads now, this principle will be valid only in certain countries, undermining international human rights law and over-emphasizing country ownership.

Such limitations and undermining of human rights language cannot be an acceptable starting point for resuming negotiations on Gender Equality. In the interest of justice and human rights, these edits on paragraphs 20, 23, 69.i. must be rejected.
3) Shortcomings in the Guidelines

As CSIPM we have insisted throughout the negotiations that these guidelines need to represent our constituencies. It is only if they respond to the realities of our lives and identities, that they will have meaning, and be implemented in their full spirit. In this regard, we want to raise three crucial issues:

First, it is fundamental for us that the peasant identities of women and girls in all their diversities are recognised, without any caveat. We regret that we have to repeat this point yet again, but it is clearly necessary as we see that the caveat in footnote number 6 has not been removed.

Being a peasant is an essential identity in food systems. It defines a broad and large mass of people who have central roles in realizing the right to food: through production, transformation, exchange, distribution and use, and through, ancestral cultural knowledge and care of the common goods that are the basis of our food systems. Peasants are rights holders recognised in previous CFS negotiated documents, such as the Voluntary Guidelines on Land Tenure, as well as in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), that was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2018, and is now part of the UN human rights framework. We therefore insist that the identity of “Peasant” be included in these negotiations and other CFS documents without any caveat questioning or even qualifying its legitimacy.

Second, the representation of Indigenous Peoples must not be undermined. There are previous and new places in the text where the term “local communities” is inserted together with Indigenous Peoples/ Women, without a comma. (the comma has been omitted in paragraphs 29, 41, 53). Being an Indigenous woman is a specific identity, and different from being part of a local community, and is recognised in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) that was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007. UNDRIP is also part of the UN human rights framework and must be recognised in and respected by the CFS as such.

Finally, despite our efforts to propose gender inclusive language, many parts of the draft document have reverted to a binary lens. This is the case for women in protracted crises, whereas it is clear that in these contexts, all genders suffer and face their right to food being threatened. When women suffer, the whole society suffers, as women in all their diversity are disproportionately responsible for care work. The language on Gender based violence, is also much more limited in the current draft and regrettably, has been relegated to the end of the Guidelines. All genders can suffer from patriarchal structures. Furthermore, adding “against women and girls” to the title of the section (3.9) does not recognise the pressing need to eliminate the violence suffered by other people who have been historically subjected to discrimination due to their genders and sexualities, outside of cis-heteronormativity and who also deserve a place in Guidelines on Gender Equality. Finally, the phrase “Including gender-based violence” excludes, which remains one of the
most pressing issues in rural areas. The accurate and appropriate terminology should be “sexual and gender-based violence”.