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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: Draft Council conclusions on the EU and its Member States' medium-term priorities for the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)
- Adoption

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS

**on the EU and its Member States' medium-term priorities for the Food and Agriculture
Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

1. REAFFIRMING the commitment of the European Union (EU) and its Member States to promoting a rules-based order with the United Nations at its core, as an important objective of EU external action; RECALLING in this regard the Council conclusions on the Global Strategy on the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy¹;

¹ 13202/16.

2. REAFFIRMING the EU and its Member States' full commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030; RECALLING in this regard the Council conclusions on the EU response to the 2030 Agenda² and the 'European Consensus on Development'³, including the commitments for the EU and its Member States as regards food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture, forestry and fisheries; UNDERLINING that the sustainability challenges are interdependent and can only be tackled effectively by addressing the interlinkages of the SDGs in a holistic and coherent approach factoring in all three dimensions of sustainable development at all levels;
3. REAFFIRMING the EU and its Member States' commitment to fully implement the Paris Agreement on climate change and to continue to play a leading role in this respect; RECALLING in this regard the Council conclusions on the Paris Agreement and preparations for the UNFCCC meetings⁴;
4. STRESSING the essential importance of closely coordinating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with the Paris Agreement on climate change and with other international commitments;
5. HIGHLIGHTING the importance and the unique role of the FAO within the UN system, as the global knowledge-based organization for sustainable agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, as well as food security and nutrition; UNDERLINING that the FAO has a substantial role to play in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement;

² 10370/17.

³ OJ C 210, 30.06.2017, p. 1.

⁴ 13198/17.

6. HIGHLIGHTING the long-standing and fruitful partnership between the EU and its Member States and the FAO; EMPHASISING the essential contribution which the EU and its Member States make to the FAO's work in all its dimensions, including as prime contributors to the overall FAO budget, and their commitment to consolidating and reinforcing their cooperation with the FAO;

The FAO's role in advancing the global sustainability and climate agenda in relation to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and food security and nutrition

7. ACKNOWLEDGES the important role of the FAO in supporting its members in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achieving the SDGs through policy guidance, technical advice, implementation of programmes and projects, as well as the monitoring and review of progress; UNDERLINES that the FAO has key responsibilities in relation to, in particular, SDG 2 and the other SDGs which are linked to its mandate and EMPHASISES the critical task which the FAO, as the custodian for 21 SDG indicators, has in advising on interlinkages between the SDGs and in contributing to the global review process, including by ensuring the availability of accurate agricultural and rural data;

8. UNDERLINES that the FAO has an essential role to play in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, in particular by providing technical expertise to support its members' efforts in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation, including in the context of their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs); ENCOURAGES the FAO, in the implementation of its Strategy on Climate Change, to maximise the full potential which sustainable agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture (including in the context of the 'Blue Growth Initiative') offer to create synergies between the climate change and development agendas; in this regard CALLS UPON the FAO to continue its efforts to foster sustainable production approaches which cover the three dimensions of sustainability, paying particular attention to agro-ecology, organic farming and sustainable production growth, as well as to sustainable soil management, sustainable forest management and sustainable fisheries, including better combating illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing in the interest of improved international ocean governance;
9. ENCOURAGES the FAO to demonstrate leadership in promoting the inclusive transition towards more sustainable agriculture and food systems, and ENCOURAGES in this context the FAO to proactively engage in efforts to highlight the real cost of food, paying due attention to the positive and negative externalities of food systems; UNDERLINES the need to promote sustainable production and consumption patterns, with a particular focus on efforts aimed at preventing and reducing food losses and waste;
10. HIGHLIGHTS the importance of responsible public and/or private investments in the agri-food sector, in line with the 'Principles on Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems' (RAI), with a view to creating inclusive economic growth and employment, especially for a rapidly growing young population in rural areas of some parts of the world, in particular in Africa; in this respect ENCOURAGES the FAO to promote the implementation of the RAI and to further, within its mandate and in partnership with relevant UN organisations and international finance institutions, policies that enhance decent rural youth employment and address the drivers of poverty, inequality and irregular migration;

11. With regard to combating the main causes of food insecurity and addressing malnutrition in all its forms, CALLS UPON the FAO to pay particular attention, within the limits of its mandate, to implementing the commitments resulting from the second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), measures aimed at promoting full observance of land tenure rights in accordance with the 'Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests' (VGGT) and at ensuring secure and equal access to productive resources, especially for smallholders, with special attention paid to women and young people; in this regard STRESSES the importance of territorial approaches, facilitating market access for family farmers and addressing excessive food price volatility;
12. STRESSES the importance and global relevance of the FAO's analytical and statistical activities as well as its standard-setting and normative activities; UNDERSCORES the need to provide adequate resourcing from the FAO's core budget for these activities, including for the scientific advice bodies and the secretariat of the joint FAO/WHO food standards programme (*Codex Alimentarius*) and the secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), as well as for joint activities by the FAO, World Health Organisation (WHO) and World Organisation on Animal Health (OIE), including on transboundary animal diseases and anti-microbial resistance (AMR) in line with the 'One Health' approach;

The FAO as a knowledge-based organisation that is fit for purpose in the wider UN system

13. UNDERLINES the need for continued efforts to ensure that the FAO is an efficient, effective and transparent knowledge-based organisation, driven by results-based management and accountability at all levels, effective dialogue and communication with its members, and with a human resources policy underpinned by diversity, equality, transparency and merit, which is fully in line with the United Nations Common System;

14. **UNDERSCORES** the need to ensure that adequate and appropriate technical expertise is available at the FAO headquarters in Rome and in the FAO's decentralised offices, so as to enable the organisation to deliver effectively on its mandate; **NOTES** in this regard the FAO's important role in linking interventions on improving food security and nutrition and humanitarian relief, both in a developing context and in acute and protracted crises;
15. **STRESSES** the need for the FAO to step up gender-transformative approaches and promote women's empowerment in all of its activities, as well as within the organisation at all levels; **HIGHLIGHTS** the importance of implementing UN system-wide actions aimed at preventing and addressing the risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment as well as other forms of harassment and authority abuse, and **CALLS UPON** the FAO to regularly report on progress made in this regard;
16. **EMPHASISES** the importance of multi-stakeholder and other partnerships supported by the FAO, with the broad consultation and participation of civil society, academia and the private sector, thus harnessing expertise and knowledge, and broadening the resource base; **STRESSES** in this regard the need to ensure full transparency and accountability, appropriate governance and decision-making processes, with a view to avoiding any conflicts of interest and **CALLS UPON** the FAO to make regular assessments of the impact of these partnerships on the FAO's activities and on their contribution to the achievement of the SDGs;

17. **UNDERSCORES** the continued need for enhanced cooperation and increased synergies between the FAO and other relevant UN agencies that deal with global issues relating to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, food security and nutrition, and food safety, in particular the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the WHO; **WELCOMES** annual progress reports on Rome-based agencies' collaboration as a useful reference to assess the impact of joint collaboration efforts among the FAO, IFAD and WFP; **UNDERLINES** that joint collaboration efforts among the FAO, IFAD and WFP should systematically include joint assessments, mapping of country-level collaboration, incentive mechanisms and joint indicators for measuring the impact of the collaboration;
18. **UNDERSCORES** the importance for the FAO of continuing to actively support and co-facilitate, jointly with the IFAD and the WFP, the work of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), including its high level panel of experts (HLPE), and to promote the implementation of all important policy recommendations which the CFS has developed in realising the Right to Adequate Food, in particular the VGGT, the RAI and the FFA⁵; **ENCOURAGES** the FAO to include these policy recommendations in all its activities relating to field projects and policy design at national level, as well as in its partnership agreements with other international and regional organisations, donor countries, civil society organisations and the private sector;

⁵ Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises.

19. CALLS UPON the FAO to play its full part in implementing the reform of the UN development system [adopted by the UN General Assembly on 31 May 2018]⁶ and to align its activities with the provisions of the relevant UNGA Resolution, including as regards the new role of the Resident Coordinators and the cost-sharing formula for the Resident Coordinator system, the UN Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAFs) and the new generation of country teams, and REQUESTS the FAO to regularly inform its members of the progress made;

Cooperation of the EU and its Member States with the FAO

20. ACKNOWLEDGES the importance for the EU and its Member States to continue to actively support the FAO in its core mandate and in its efforts to advance the global sustainability and climate agenda in relation to agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and food security and nutrition;
21. LOOKS FORWARD TO continuing the active collaboration of the EU and its Member States with the FAO in its standard-setting and normative activities, in particular with the joint secretariat of the FAO/WHO food standards programme (*Codex Alimentarius*), the secretariat of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC) and their scientific advice bodies, and to support activities jointly undertaken by the FAO, WHO and OIE, including on transboundary animal diseases and anti-microbial resistance (AMR), in line with the 'One Health' Approach;

⁶ UN General Assembly Resolution A/72/L.52: Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

22. HIGHLIGHTS the relevance of intensifying mutually beneficial cooperation between research and academic institutions in the EU and the FAO, so as to advance the application of research findings to the FAO's work;
24. STRESSES that it remains vitally important for the EU and its Member States to engage, in a concerted manner, with other FAO regional groups with a view to enhancing mutual trust and seeking efficiency and complementarity; and to have regular and strategic dialogue sessions with the FAO's senior management.
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