



Council of the
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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
No. prev. doc.:	XXXX/23
Subject:	Council Conclusions on the EU's priorities for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Delegations will find in the annex the first draft of the Council conclusions on the EU's priorities for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which has been prepared by the Presidency based on the Working Party's discussions in the second half of 2022 and the written contributions received from delegations.

Draft COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS
on the EU's priorities for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the
United Nations (FAO): opportunities and challenges for the future

The Council of the European Union,

RECALLING the Council conclusions on:

- the Convention on Biological Diversity: fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 15) to the CBD; tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (COP-MOP 10); fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (COP-MOP 4) (13975/22);
- the Trade and Sustainability Review (13633/22);
- the Team Europe response to global food insecurity (10066/22);
- EU climate diplomacy: accelerating the implementation of Glasgow outcomes (6120/22);
- the EU's priorities for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit (9335/21);
- climate and energy diplomacy – delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal (5263/21);
- the Farm to Fork Strategy (12099/20);
- EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism (10341/19);
- supporting the Sustainable Development Goals across the world (10997/19);
- building a sustainable Europe by 2030 – progress thus far and next steps (14835/19);
- the EU and its Member States' medium-term priorities for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (10227/18).

REITERATES its full commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

REAFFIRMS its strong commitment to multilateralism and the rules-based international order, with the UN system at its core, to provide effective responses to the major challenges of our time that call for global solutions, with full respect for universal human rights.

HIGHLIGHTS the fundamental role of FAO, as a neutral and member-led UN agency, in eradicating hunger and malnutrition and achieving food security for all, as well as in tackling the intrinsically linked challenges related to the climate crisis and biodiversity loss.

IS DEEPLY CONCERNED about the global food crisis, which is affecting the poorest countries and most vulnerable populations in particular and which has been severely aggravated by the disruptive impact of Russia's unjustified and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine. In this regard, REITERATES its full support for the UN-led efforts to avert further escalation of the food crisis and ACKNOWLEDGES FAO's efforts to address the immediate consequences of Russia's aggression, both in Ukraine and in the most affected countries globally.

EMPHASISES the importance of FAO as a specialised knowledge-based organisation in establishing norms and standards based on scientific evidence and knowledge, and in providing quality data and statistics, as a basis for its valuable technical support and capacity-building activities.

ACKNOWLEDGES FAO's key contributions in the areas of agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, and CALLS on FAO to promote a sustainable future within its fields of expertise by:

- taking the lead in promoting a transformative food system approach which delivers food security, nutrition and healthy diets for all, with a particular emphasis on vulnerable populations, while at the same time contributing solutions to climate change and environmental challenges, including biodiversity loss;

- fostering a smart, competitive, resilient and diversified agricultural sector which can provide productivity growth through agricultural practices that integrate in a balanced manner the three dimensions of sustainability, ensuring long-term efficiency and sustainability of food systems and food security;
- supporting and guiding further synergies between agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, to take advantage of shared opportunities and address shared challenges;
- promoting sustainable and effective integrated management of water, soil, forest, fishery and aquaculture resources, providing transparent, fair and predictable production and consumption conditions;
- exploring new and innovative sustainable business models within its areas of expertise, including in the field of circular economy and bioeconomy, in collaboration with the private sector and other relevant actors, in order to provide additional and alternative livelihoods along the entire food chain which can be applicable to a range of actors – small, medium and large scale.

UNDERLINES its concern regarding conflict and war as a driver of increased food insecurity and INVITES FAO to expand and strengthen its work in this field to guide future action in support of vulnerable countries and populations, in particular by:

- developing and expanding its contribution to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, at global, regional and local level, through collaboration with other relevant organisations, in line with its mandate and comparative advantages, building on successful initiatives such as the Global Network Against Food Crises;
- continuing to adhere to and promote humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law in its emergency programming;

- monitoring the effects of conflict and war on global food security, and the associated risks, and continuing to provide members with timely, high-quality information on market developments, as well as promoting market transparency and well-functioning, open and predictable trade in line with WTO rules;
- putting forward short- and medium-term policy initiatives aimed at addressing emerging crises effectively and rapidly, with a focus on the most vulnerable countries and populations.

HIGHLIGHTS the need for continued efforts to ensure the effective and transparent governance of FAO, in accordance with the highest UN standards, and to maintain FAO's capacity to deliver on its mandate in accordance with the needs and expectations of its members. In this regard:

- WELCOMES improvements in the governance of FAO, such as the alignment of the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031 with the Sustainable Development Goals, the invigorated business model, science-based decision making and the strengthening of the independent Office of Evaluation;
- ACKNOWLEDGES the positive developments regarding HR issues, such as work on the prevention of harassment, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as regarding improved risk management, and the strengthening of the Office of the Inspector General, and URGES FAO to continue this work;
- EXPECTS further improvements regarding governance, effectiveness, transparency and accountability in line with UN standards, guided by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) and in close dialogue with FAO members. Areas identified by the Council of the European Union include, but are not limited to:
 - o closer alignment of FAO's work with the UN's overall direction and its role in the wider UN system, particularly through support to the UN country teams and formulation of United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, in collaboration with IFAD, WFP and other relevant UN agencies;

- results-based management and performance reports, with a particular focus on decentralised offices and in programmes and projects, including alignment of corporate policies with actions at country level, as well as improved utilisation of country-level knowledge in FAO corporate policies;
- the development of a programmatic approach which focuses on results and impact, ensuring a more transparent and predictable programming process and a clear vision for FAO's voluntary contributions;
- the funding of the organisation, including the management of the various funding arrangements and how these contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the organisation and the strategic framework in an effective, efficient and transparent way;
- gender equality and improved gender parity in senior positions within the organisation and integration of young people's and indigenous peoples' perspectives at all levels of the organisation, in both policy and practice.

UNDERLINES the longstanding and fruitful partnership between FAO and the EU and its Member States and WELCOMES continued collaboration and dialogue, particularly on:

- sustainable development, with all three dimensions in focus, in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, as well as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including implementation of the climate strategy, the science and innovation strategy, the strategy on biodiversity, and others matters on the agendas of the FAO governing bodies;
- food systems transformation, including thematic leverage points such as advancing the work on fertiliser diversification, promoting food crop diversity and alternatives to animal proteins, reducing food loss and waste along the entire supply chain and reducing the use of fossil fuels in agriculture, forestry and fisheries;

- highlighting the importance of research, all forms of innovation and knowledge sharing, including through cooperation between research and academic institutions in the EU and FAO, as well as between other stakeholders in the EU and FAO;
 - development of standard-setting and normative activities, including within the work of Codex Alimentarius and IPPC;
 - further developing the One Health approach to address the complex health challenges for humans, animals, plants and the environment, including joint efforts to reduce antimicrobial resistance in agricultural systems;
 - ensuring continued support for the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) as the foremost inclusive multi-stakeholder platform for promoting world food security, and its High-Level Panel of Experts (HLPE), and promoting the uptake and utilisation of CFS policy recommendations and voluntary guidelines.
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