



**Meeting of the General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals
United Nations - New York – 22-24 May 2013**

**European Union and its Member States - Speaking Points on “food security and nutrition,
sustainable agriculture, desertification, land degradation and drought”**

[These address the themes of 22/23 sessions as well as the issues raised in the 3 background briefs]

As outlined at previous meetings, the EU and its Member States are currently elaborating their position on the post-2015 agenda, including on SDGs. The following are therefore preliminary ideas. Our key messages to the open working group today concern first (i) food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture and second (ii) desertification, land degradation and drought. The two issues are closely related. At the same time, each of them has merits on its own. At this stage, we do not prejudge whether or how they should be handled together in a future structure of goals and targets.

1. On Food and nutrition security, and sustainable agriculture

- We welcome the background briefs produced which reflect the ongoing work, notably the results of the recent “High Level Consultation on Hunger, Food Security and Nutrition in the Post-2015 Development Framework” held in Madrid. We also value the work led by FAO/IFAD/WFP, as well as the substantive and multi-stakeholder nature of the work of the CFS. It confirms that it is a key issue to focus our work ahead. The progress on MDG1 has been significant, but there are still just under 900 million undernourished and 2 billion suffering from under and over nutrition. **As we have said before, we need to finish the job and build on the achievements of the MDGs, by promoting a holistic approach that integrates all three dimensions of sustainable development. We also need to concentrate efforts on those most in need, notably the LDCs.**
- There is of course a wide range of relevant policy issues (including trade, infrastructure, functional markets, etc.), and broad **policy coherence** among Member States as well as UN entities is essential. But we also have to gradually focus on the central elements that could constitute clear goals be universal and the basis for meaningful targets, where progress could be measured through indicators, hence some of the below illustrative examples. In doing so, we have to be mindful of the importance of a **rights-based approach**, notably the right of everyone to have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, and the issue of land rights and entitlements.
- Work ahead should take into account the **four pillars of food security** (availability of food, access to food, stability and utilization). Important issues for specific consideration include, for instance, climate-smart, sustainable and nutrition-sensitive agricultural development; sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, access and rights to land and credit, **especially for women and youth**; water resource management; reduced land and ecosystem - including the marine ecosystem - degradation; social protection; gender and the promotion of resilience among rural communities.
- The **nutritional status** of populations can be seen as a barometer of the success of policies on food security and poverty reduction in general and **the current MDG framework has placed insufficient emphasis on under nutrition, including the multi-sectoral approach that is required. This needs to be improved.** We value in this regard the Scaling up Nutrition (SUN) movement or the prominent role of nutrition in the new Food Assistance Convention.

- We welcome the **UNSG's Zero Hunger Challenge**. There is a need to calibrate processes that address sustainable food systems (food losses/waste); stunting; persistent high rate of acute malnutrition, making quality and nutritious food accessible (also sensitive of genetic diversity) **prioritise small and family farmers and their organizations, with a specific attention given to women and youth, by empowering them**; enhancing access to and conservation of natural resources and ecosystems and linking them to local, regional and wherever possible international markets. We need to approach the issue from the full food chain perspective.
- We need to give sufficient attention to the **land/food-water-energy nexus**, factoring in the impact of climate change on yields (and yield gaps) and the increased water–stressed situations.
- We need to address the **urban-rural interdependency**. We will only have resilient urban centres and cities if we have flourishing rural areas. Smooth interaction between rural and urban areas is a prerequisite for improving sustainable food systems in urban areas.
- We need to address the **health-related impact** of our food systems for the population at large (stunting, obesity and non communicable diseases), both in developed and developing countries. Over-consumption needs to be addressed. UNEP estimates for example that food is already produced for 10 billion people, but half is spoiled or thrown away as garbage (food waste).
- We need **sustainable agricultural food production systems, including fisheries and forestry. Business as usual is not sustainable**. Good soil quality, biodiversity and sustainable land management and healthy marine environment and fish stocks will directly contribute to reliable supply of food and reduction of food and nutrition security risks. Sustainable agriculture is a prerequisite for that. We will need to consider how goals and targets will interact to ensure the best sustainable outcomes, whilst ensuring consistency with existing international commitments, including climate and biodiversity commitments.
- **Research and innovation** is part of the solution. There needs to be a prioritisation of advisory and extension services as well as research applications which reflect more the demands of farmers, fisher folk and indigenous populations as well those earning a living from agriculture and fisheries on islands.
- Making **more responsible investments in agriculture**, is essential to eradicate hunger and poverty and to promote prosperity and well-being, while safeguarding a healthy environment and ecosystem services. This also encompasses corporate social responsibility in agri-food chains. Major investments are required for the world to feed its growing population in 2050. We therefore very much value **partnerships bringing together all relevant actors and through which aid can have a true catalytic effect**.

2. Desertification, land degradation and drought

- Sustainable use of land and soil resources, as well as conservation and restoration of ecosystems and forests will help to achieve food security and biomass production, halt biodiversity loss and mitigate climate change. It is also one of the preconditions for **eradicating poverty, providing resilience to climate change and achieving real and lasting political stability, peace and security**.
- Land is a finite and in human terms non-renewable resource. According to UNEP, 24% of the global land area has already suffered declines in health and productivity over the past quarter century as a result of unsustainable land-use. Over 1.5 billion people are affected by desertification, land degradation and drought in more than 110 countries, 90% of whom live in low income areas.

- Decreasing productivity in agriculture, the loss of livelihood opportunities, the deterioration and destruction of ecosystems and the devaluing of the natural capital of societies are just some of the economic consequences of desertification, land degradation and drought. Between the periods 1981 - 2003, it is thought that land degradation has reduced the productivity of the world's terrestrial surface by about 25%. Annual costs of soil loss worldwide are estimated at 400 billion dollars.
- Land and soil degradation is a global issue that we believe will need to feature in the overarching post-2015 framework, in line with the commitment made at Rio+20 **to strive to achieve a land degradation neutral world in the context of sustainable development**. Some of the most pressing land degradation trends at the global level that need to be addressed include: soil erosion; loss of soil organic matter (especially from peatlands conversion), soil contamination and land take from urban sprawl.
- Action plans to combat drought and desertification must be geared around the possibilities of extending the availability of water. Obtaining water accounts and monitoring desertification processes in a river basin are for example key methods of desertification prevention. Desertification must be fought at all levels (including by the use of space derived data) but this battle must ultimately be won at the **local level**, for instance by promoting sustainable groundwater use, and through improved governance directed to a "culture of prevention", based on a better understanding of the natural processes linked to the desertification.