

**Eleventh Meeting of the UNFSS Scientific Group (ScGroup)
14 September 2021, 14.00-15.00 (CEST)**

Meeting Notes

Agenda of the Meeting (Meeting agenda was shared with the participants prior to the meeting)

14.00 – 14:20 1. the Summit Sept 23rd

14:20 – 14:40 2. ScGroup and partners publications

14:40 – 14: 50 3. follow up to Summit

14:50 – 15:00 4. any other business

Introduction:

The Chairperson of the ScGroup, Joachim von Braun welcomed the members of the Scientific Group to the last meeting before the Food Systems Summit on 23 September 2021.

Agenda Item 1: the Summit Sept 23rd

Joachim von Braun informed the ScGroup that the 8th meeting of the FSS Advisory Committee had been postponed from 13 to 15 September. He was therefore unable to report on the discussions at the meeting to the ScGroup as originally planned. Instead, he presented the input material for the Advisory Committee meeting prepared by UN Special Envoy Agnes Kalibata (see attached PPT). He noted that expectations for the UNFSS are high. “The world is talking about the UNFSS at the level of UN Member States and beyond”, thus one of the main objectives has been achieved.

Within the input material, he highlighted in particular the slide that lists relevant ScGroup reports and partner briefs that relate to the five action areas proposed for the Summit. He also presented the draft agenda for the UNFSS and reported that he has been invited to speak in the opening session “The People’s Plenary – Delivering the Future We Want”.

In the subsequent discussion, **Sheryl Hendriks** reported on the progress in building a strong coalition to implement the true cost (and price) of food and related policy options. The coalition is already looking beyond the UNFSS to explore options for influencing the next development agenda beyond the SDGs.

Louise Fresco welcomed the proposed Portfolio of Action for the Summit, but also felt that it was too complicated. She stressed the need for big take-home messages to increase the reach and impact of the Summit outcomes. She also raised questions about the role of the ScGroup and the broader science community in the implementation of the Summit outcomes, including how to contribute effectively to the development and implementation of national transformation strategies. The importance of this question was reiterated by several ScGroup members.

In this regard, **Mohamed Hassan** noted the potential role of the academies in linking scientists and national policy makers.

Maximo Torero stressed that efforts to generate solid evidence for decision-making processes need to continue after Summit so as not to lose the energy created so far. To this end, existing partnerships should be preserved where they work well and can have an impact on national and regional

transformation strategies. He cautioned that the national strategies currently being developed are still weak and that further evidence is needed to highlight the urgency of taking action.

Claudia Sadoff raised concerns that the excitement generated around the Pre-Summit may have declined as we move towards the Summit. Clear messages are needed to keep the ambition high and science at the forefront to avoid the Summit outcomes to get lost in politics. Regarding the Summit follow-up, she noted that as post-Summit governance structures and financing mechanisms are being set up, the role of the ScGroup and opportunities for additional funding to support learning, exchange and science should be discussed.

Ismahane Elouafi reiterated UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed's statement at the Pre-Summit that the Rome-based organisations are expected to take the lead in the implementation of the Summit outcomes. She added that it will be important to find a means to engage the ScGroup in this process to ensure that implementation efforts are based on science, data and know-how.

Joachim von Braun stressed that the ScGroup had never made overtures to suggest that it is looking for continuation beyond the set deadline of its mandate, which is end of 2021. Nevertheless, he agreed with earlier speakers that Science experience and networks of knowledge partnerships are needed so that quality of the Summit implementation at country and global levels is assured. He also cautioned that in some countries the capacities of the relevant UN organisations and/or the scientific communities are weak. Implementation strategies need to be adapted to these varying circumstances and need support mechanisms.

Ousmane Badiane reflected on how the scientific community can add value at the national level. He noted that the implementation of the national transformation strategies was a huge undertaking that no single or even coalition of organisations can handle alone. He stressed the importance of empowering countries to lead this process at the national level in line with their local circumstances, to which the Rome-based organisations can then contribute.

Urs Nigli commented on the future governance of the coalitions. He suggested involving additional partners in the True Pricing coalition, given the growing number of organisations working on this topic. He also suggested involving additional civil society groups in the Agro-ecology coalition some of whom feel that so far the discussions had been dominated by technology-based solutions, including the comment published by the ScGroup Chair and Vice Chairs in *Nature*. He noted that several countries have expressed interest in actively engaging in the Agro-ecology coalition (e.g. Switzerland, Germany, France).

Joachim von Braun clarified that the coalitions are supposed to be self-organized within the five action areas under which they can form. Importantly, they should be country-led, not primarily driven by scientists and civil society. Without government buy-in, the coalitions will not be successful. He stressed that it will be important to engage low and middle-income countries in all coalitions; to date, some coalitions suffer from "Northern" bias.

Agenda item 2: ScGroup and partners publications

Joachim von Braun reported that the Science Reader for the UNFSS was released on 14 September and is available on the ScGroup website (<https://sc-fss2021.org/materials/scientific-group-reports-and-briefs/>). The Reader features selected research outputs by the ScGroup and its partners, a summary of discussions at the Science Days and an introduction to the ScGroup. He encouraged ScGroup members to support the dissemination of the Reader among their communities. The Reader will also be part of the UN Compendium that will collect everything produced in the context of the UNFSS (see PPT for the outline of the Compendium). The Strategy Paper of the ScGroup will be translated into the UN languages.

In addition to the comment already published in *Nature*, other journal articles and commentaries are forthcoming, incl. in *Nature*, *Science*, *World Food Security* etc. Further academic publications are expected in the future at the initiative of the ScGroup members.

ScGroup members welcomed the publication of the reader. **Claudia Sadoff** suggested distilling key findings in shorter policy briefs and more targeted science policy communication. **Mohamed Hassan** suggested engaging national academies to extract key messages at country level and disseminate research findings. **Louise Fresco** stressed the importance of integrating the material in teaching and capacity building efforts; the academies could assist in this effort.

Joachim von Braun supported these proposals, in particular to relate key documents to different types of countries and synthesise key findings in country-level and regional briefs. This should be part of the post-Summit implementation plans, including those to be developed by the Rome-based partners.

He also encouraged continued information exchange among the ScGroup. Uma Lele, for instance, has shared a summary of the plenary discussions at ICAE 2021 that relate to the Summit themes which was made available on the ScGroup website. If other associations hold meetings with important messages related to the UNFSS themes, they can also be posted on SG website which will remain live after the Summit.

He also asked ScGroup members to share follow-up activities to the Summit in countries or regions with the ScGroup leadership. Ousmane Badiane, for instance, is planning to evaluate the impacts of the Summit outcomes for Africa and consider the mechanisms and processes needed to achieve real action on the ground.

Agenda 3: follow up to Summit

Joachim von Braun presented the input material prepared by Agnes Kalibata with regard to follow-up action after the Summit (see attached PTT). He will share any key issues that arise at the Advisory Committee meeting on 15 September with the ScGroup.

Agenda Item 4: Any other business

The next meetings of the ScGroup will be held in mid-October, November and early/mid-December.

Joachim von Braun strongly encouraged ScGroup members to register for the Summit if they have not done so already.

On behalf of the ScGroup, **Louise Fresco** thanked Joachim von Braun for his leadership. She observed that it has been in a long road to get to the Summit. Throughout this time, Joachim von Braun has kept the process on track with his remarkable commitment and good temper, and has kept the diverse group together. She noted that what has been achieved will continue beyond the Summit.