

## **Thirteenth Meeting of the UNFSS Scientific Group (ScGroup)**

**15 November 2021, 14.00-15.00 (CEST)**

### **Meeting Notes**

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

1. 14.00-14:20 Looking back at the UNFSS and the way forward (Chief Guest: UNFSS Special Envoy Agnes Kalibata)
2. 14:20-14:40: Science in support of the implementation of the UNFSS actions at national and international levels (Draft paper shared with participants)
3. 14:40-14:55 Concept for preliminary (self-) assessment of the role of the Scientific Group, and what more can be accomplished?
4. 14:55-15:00 Any other business

#### **Introduction and Agenda Item 1: Looking back at the UNFSS and the way forward**

The Chairperson of the ScGroup, Joachim von Braun opened the meeting, welcomed the participants including the **special guest Agnes Kalibata**, UN Special Envoy on Food Systems. The Chair presented the meeting agenda, looking back at the UNFSS and the way forward for the summit. Agnes Kalibata was invited by the Chair to present an overview of the summit outcomes and the way forward.

Agnes Kalibata thanked the Chair for the opportunity to provide this overview to the ScGroup. She expressed great appreciation for the ScGroup for its research and input for the UNFSS. The science and evidence base of the UNFSS supported by the ScGroup gave the summit a credibility that helped in gaining support from a large number of UN member states.

She noted the active participation of UN member states in the summit; 165 countries participated in the two-day event with close to one hundred of these represented by heads of states. Important themes emerging from the summit including from the heads of members states were, recovery from Covid-19 pandemic, global collaboration on food systems, food security, child stunting, sustainable food systems. She added that sixty-nine member states noted the salience of science and innovation in the transformation of the food systems.

The implementation of science-agenda was also addressed in the summit and the way-forward was articulated by many member states. 230 commitments were registered on action areas. These commitments were made by diverse groups of players, from small NGOs, multinational institutions to members states. A number of coalitions have emerged from the Action Tracks and member states are being accorded adequate opportunity to engage with coalitions. A part of this process is the national level dialogues that are underway in the post-summit period.

Special envoy appreciated the ***draft paper on the science support in implementation of the UNFSS actions*** shared by the Chair Joachim von Braun. She said that the paper will play an important role in the supporting the UNFSS hub and member countries in their follow up and collaboration. She presented a broad contour of the UNFSS follow up Hub; it is envisioned to

provide opportunities to the key players of the UNFSS for connecting and collaborating in the follow-up and implementation process. The Hub will collect and provide information to key players including for national level implementation. The UN secretariat will provide support to the Hub till March 2022. A follow-up to the summit will be held in two years to showcase the post-summit progress. The special envoy ended the briefing with another note of thanks to the members of the ScGroup.

The Chair opened the meeting for Q&A on the briefing from the special envoy. The questions raised by members and the summarized responses by the Special Envoy are below:

- How can scientists, science-bodies, and global research hubs such as the CGIAR continue their engagement with the UNFSS till the follow-up?

*The UNFSS follow-up coordination hub will need the support of global science communities and will continue to link with CGIAR. The follow up work will be conducted by the UN agencies. The Hub will ensure collaboration of these institutions and continue to highlight food system perspectives. Scientific community has the opportunity to engage with the Hub as well as with the UN agencies.*

- Is there any special attention paid to world regions Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia, that have the highest proportion of undernourished people in the world? Were special initiatives announced for these two regions?

*The summit laid emphasis on these important areas for intervention. The Secretary General has initiated dialogues with institutions for mobilizing finance for the implementation. Issues of finance, governance and implementation of science and innovation are important issues on which dialogues are under way in the post-summit process.*

- What are the lessons learnt from the criticism on the lack of (perceived) inclusivity of the summit and its capture by the private sector?

*Youth and indigenous communities were mobilized in the summit. The criticism of the summit is part of the broader mistrust of the private sector. This criticism can be countered only through the proliferation of science-based ideas that can come from the science communities.*

- What role can be played by the UN in eschewing the current silo approach towards achieving the SDGs for a synergized approach?

*Intentional efforts need to be made to push for food systems approach towards achieving the SDGs and to strengthen collaboration between the various institutions.*

- What role can the UN play in the implementation of the summit agenda at the global and the national levels?

*A major role of the UN will be at the global level. However, country dialogues will continue. The follow-up will provide support to countries in mapping out their country-level implementation pathways.*

- What is the best way of translating the rhetoric into action? How can the momentum towards the summit be put to use to reach the summit goals?

*Coalitions have been mobilized around the Action Tracks and these coalitions are engaged with countries for support in design of national level implementation strategies.*

Member ScGroup, Maximo Torero added that process of setting up of UNFSS follow-up Hub and ecosystem of science support is underway. Inclusion of youth and indigenous groups in the follow-up process are a major preoccupation of the process implementers.

**Agenda Item 2: Science in support of the implementation of UNFSS actions at national and international levels:**

The Chair opened the second agenda item of the meeting by referring to the draft paper on “Science in support of the implementation of UNFSS” circulated among the ScGroup prior to the meeting. The paper is considered to provide a template for countries and regional and international organizations calling on science communities when engaging with UNFSS implementation of proposed actions. Furthermore, the work of the ScGroup can be mapped out at the country level. Written comments on the draft paper are requested from the ScGroup by November 24<sup>th</sup>.

In the discussion following the Chair’s remarks, members raised the following key points:

- A need for carrying our technology needs assessment of low-and-middle income countries exists.
- The questions of engagement of science communities with policy makers and stakeholders and of engagement of science in the follow-up remain to be adequately addressed.
- Models on institutional innovations exist, there is need to connect the institutional and technological dimensions of innovation to ensure that innovation addresses site/context specific expectations and that innovations are harnessed in support of achieving the SDGs.
- Science consortia and the CGIAR can play a role at the regional and national levels in implementation, engagement of scientific bodies with policy makers and for conducting region/context specific interdisciplinary research.
- Making connections with governments remains a challenge and scientists have a role in translating scientific research for the policy makers.
- There must be regular consultations with scientific hubs and implementation of science should be a central agenda of these consultations.

Special Envoy Kalibata remarked that the paper will be an important resource for the implementation process. It is an opportunity to engage science with policy institutions.

**Agenda item 3: Concept for preliminary assessment of the role of the Scientific Group, and what more can be accomplished?**

The Chair opened discussion on agenda item three with these questions: What is the summit outcome(s)? How can these outcomes be measured?

Special Envoy remarked that a post-summit assessment will focus on the processes mobilized and on the summit outputs. Assessment of outcomes can only be done over a longer-term horizon as the transformations envisioned in the summit agenda are transformations that take years in fruition. She welcomed positive and critical feedback on the summit. She added that as a participant at the COP26, she had proposed focusing COP27 in Egypt on food systems.

**Agenda Item 4: Any other business**

The Chairperson shared a letter of the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) – the association of about 140 academies of sciences - to the UN Secretary General lending support to exploring an IP on Food Systems. The IAP letter has also been posted on the website of the ScGroup (<https://sc-fss2021.org/2021/11/15/statements-about-engagement-of-science-in-the-un-food-systems-summit/>) . The Vice Chairperson Mohamed Hasan noted that a similar position was articulated in a statement of the IAP on need for closer collaboration of IPCC and IPBES.

As per the terms of reference of the ScGroup, the body dissolves by the end of December 2021. The next meeting of the ScGroup will be its last meeting. The meeting will be held on December 17, 2021. The Chair closed the meeting with thanking the ScGroup members for their engagement and the Special Envoy in particular.

The meeting closed at 15:00 h CEST.