

## Fourteenth (14<sup>th</sup>) Meeting of the UNFSS Scientific Group (ScGroup)

17 December 2021, 14.00-15.15 (CET)

### Meeting Notes

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

1. 14.00-14:45 Way forward from the UNFSS - Transition of structures, toward implementation, and science support for implementation of UNFSS actions

#### Guest Speakers

- Stefanos Fotiou, Director, Office of Sustainable Development Goals and UNFSS Hub at Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO)
- Agnes Kalibata, UN Undersec and Special Envoy for the UNFSS

(Draft paper, “Engaging Science in Food Systems Transformation: Toward Implementation of the Action Agenda of the United Nations Food Systems Summit” shared with the participants prior to the meeting)

2. 14:45-15:00: On going initiatives (Publications and any other business)

3. 15:00-15:15 Farewell

#### 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 **Stefanos Fotiou**, Director, Office Sustainable Development Goals and UNFSS Hub at Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). ScGroup members, Andrew Kambugu and Kaoru Kitajima did not attend the meeting and had conveyed their regrets to the Chair prior to the meeting. Maximo Torero was absent due to health reasons.

Participants were informed of important meetings of members of the ScGroup. A **meeting was held with representatives of the Indigenous Communities** on December 13, 2021. Another **meeting with farmers’ organizations** from different hemispheres was held. ScGroup Chair also participated in the **1000<sup>th</sup> Food Systems Dialogue**.

The Chair presented the meeting agenda and the three Vice Chairs; Louise Fresco, Koasar Afsana and Mohamed Hassan were invited to present their opening remarks and reflections on the Summit process and the role of science in UNFSS implementation action internationally and at national levels.

Louise Fresco highlighted the ScGroup’s achievements. Notably, mainstreaming the food systems approach to SDGs and highlighting the role of science in decision making. UNFSS was successful in giving a scientific underpinning to the concept of food systems. She also appreciated the holistic approach to food systems integrating the approaches from social and natural sciences. She further remarked on the implementation of the UNFSS agenda. It was noted that countries require help in the implementation of an *integrated food systems policy*. The Hub must assist in the formulation and implementation of these policies at the national

level. These policies should focus investment, training and science backed decision making. The Hub may provide format, identify partners, and process of formulation and baseline data.

Kaosar Afsana shared the experience from her home country Bangladesh noting that the country is representative of the challenges faced by the global food systems; the country lies in one of the most populated regions of the world that is likely to be severely adversely affected by climate change. She shared that after the UNFSS, the Ministry of Food created a research wing. She expressed hope that the momentum around the UNFSS should not be lost. It was reiterated that countries, particularly those in the global South, should be helped through sharing of scientific knowledge.

Mohamed Hassan also commended the efforts of the ScGroup in outlining the food systems related research to policy circles. He pointed out the challenge of translating the recommendations of the ScGroup to the UNFSS into policy action and the implementation of the science driven recommendations. He noted the key role of Inter-Academy Partnership (IAP) in the translation of recommendations for policymakers. He reiterated a need for a strong Science-policy interface for food systems in line with the recommendations of the IAP.

Special envoy UNFSS, Agnes Kalibata was invited by the Chair to present an overview of the summit outcomes and to introduce the Hub. Agnes Kalibata expressed 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. Among the key contributions of the ScGroup in the summit process, she highlighted the comprehensive definition of key concepts including food systems, highlighting the critical areas of intervention, and bringing the network of scientists together.

Special Envoy detailed the vision and expected functions of the Hub (PPT is shared on the Sc-fss website). The following points were made during her presentation to the ScGroup. The Hub has been entrusted to follow up on the recommendations of the UNFSS. Its functions include:

1. to sustain the narrative of food systems transformation in the efforts towards the attainment of the SDGs,
2. To act as bridge between the various institutions involved in SDGs support,
3. To support national governments and maintain partnerships with global partners,
4. To take stock of progress and implementation of the UNFSS agenda in two years.

The complementary functions of the Hub include support of national dialogues and implementation pathways, connect the ecosystem of support, provide strategic thought leadership, support communication and advocacy and directly engage and continue engagement with stakeholders including producer groups, farmers' organizations, indigenous communities, youth and women. The Hub will not replace any existing UN functions or capacities. It is not an implementation agency, nor will it advocate for itself as an entity. There will not be heavy reporting structures of the Hub. Science is expected to critical stakeholder in

the Hub. The Hub will report to the SG to the HLPE, present annual country results reports and an overall comprehensive progress evaluation to the oversight group on progress and lessons.

The Special Envoy conveyed her sincere thanks to the Scientific Group and to the Chairperson Joachim von Braun. She welcomed and introduced **Stefanos Fotiou, the Director of the UNFSS Hub at FAO.**

Stefanos Fotiou appreciated the dynamism generated around the UNFSS. He presented his remarks on the draft paper “Engaging Science in Food Systems Transformation: Toward Implementation of the Action Agenda of the United Nations Food Systems Summit”. The support of national governments in the implementation pathways is a key role for the UNFSS Hub. The global level support should keep the momentum around the UNFSS high. The interaction of the Hub and the Science Ecosystem of Support will be integral to the UNFSS follow-up. He further made the following key points:

- There is a need to translate science for policymakers; the Hub can play a role in the communication of these messages to the policymakers. The key messages from scientific reports have to be distilled for the policymakers.
- The Hub will only serve as a connector between the Science Ecosystem of support and the policymakers
- The type of support to be offered by the Science Ecosystem of Support and by the Hub needs clarification
- There is a need to inform and support small countries and provide knowledge and advise on key issues
- Particular attention needs to be paid to the financing of science for food systems research. The finance and engineering in support of science is not systemic. There is a need to develop innovative financing mechanisms for food systems research and transformation support.

The Chairperson ScGroup proposed a roundtable of science communities to kickstart the operations of “Science ecosystem of support” for the Hub. An open discussion between the relevant actors will streamline the working of the Hub and open the doors for future communication and exchange.

ScGroup member Ismahane Elouafi presented a **Science and Innovation Strategy** being developed at the FAO. The strategic framework for the next decade focusses on better production, better nutrition, better environment, and better life for all. The focus of the framework is SDG2, SDG4 and SDG10 (reducing inequality). Science and innovation are accelerators to achieve the 2030 development agenda. She also shared that the event “**Science Days**” is planned in the first week of October 2022. The event will be held around the World Food Day. The event will be used to launch an **Agri-Food Systems, Technology and Innovations Outlook**. The outlook will exhibit the innovations and success stories at the country-levels. A foresight on the technology and innovations for the next thirty years that will change the Agri food systems. A workshop is planned in February 2022. This workshop will focus on science and innovation and the technologies needed to frame the right policies, and investments.

Members Rattan Lal, Jean-François Soussana and Mohamed Hassan, Patrick Caron and Urs Niggli also submitted their remarks on the process. All members of the ScGroup shared their reflections on their engagement with the ScGroup and noted that they had learned from the process immensely. They thanked the ScGroup Chair, Joachim von Braun and hoped for continued collaboration.

**Agenda Item 2: On going initiatives (Publications and any other business):**

The Chairperson announced that a final Newsletter of the ScGroup will be issued. He also reported the progress on the Springer edited Volume for the UNFSS that will include all papers from ScGroup and Partners shared for publication.

**Agenda Item 4: Farewell**

The Chair extended his thanks to the group for their support, collaboration and research inputs. The website of the ScGroup and its Twitter handle will continue to operate and will be used for future communication.

The meeting closed at 15:15 h CEST.