

Food & Agriculture Cluster – NGO Major Group

Statement on the Final Draft of the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the 2022 session of the Economic and Social Council on the annual theme “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

The figures of the latest State of Food Security and Nutrition report released on 6 July are a clear warning signal about the failure to reach the 2030 targets. We are seriously concerned that instead of changing course, the international responses to the current food crisis are pushing to deepen the very same policies that got us here. Paragraph 14 of the final draft of the declaration, for instance, calls for preserving and strengthen global value and supply chains for food and agriculture. In other words, it repeats the mantra of “keep global trade open” that the UN has been reciting in the past months as the main response to multiple crisis. It is also concerning to see that paragraph 14 places at the same level the need to support sustainable food systems as the call for strengthening global value chains. In fact, this response does not acknowledge that global food supply chains are extremely fragile and vulnerable to shocks, that the control over global food supply chains is concentrated in the hands of few countries and few corporations and that global trade has fostered fossil-fuel based food systems.

The world desperately needs a new food security strategy, which makes explicit the need to re-think the global economic model while decentralizing food systems transformation. It should not be primarily based on global trade but rather re-localize food systems, make them resilient to climatic, political and economic shocks, reduce food price volatility and start the transition to agroecological food systems.

The current food crisis is part of a systemic crisis. Systemic solutions require changes in the global rules and institutional arrangements shaping trade, tax, debt, financial markets, investments, and public finances. Responses to the food crisis cannot be short-term and pragmatic only. Focusing exclusively on them risks ossifying the status quo. Systemic solutions require the strengthening of multilateral and democratic governance spaces at the UN. The challenge for the international community is to be able to discuss and agree on coordinated policy responses that would change the existing rules in order to allow developing countries to regain sovereignty as well as policy and fiscal space to shape new food policies.

Despite the many drafts, the final draft declaration under informal silence procedure unfortunately does little to strengthen the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the main multilateral UN body for food governance.

We recall that the CFS is the foremost multilateral space for inclusive global food governance within a multilateral human rights framework. The CFS is unique in assigning priority voice to those actors most impacted by the policies under discussion, while retaining final decision-making by governments and, hence ensuring their accountability. This principle, that guides the multilateral space of the CFS, is fundamental if we are to truly address the multi-layered crisis that humanity and the planet are facing, exacerbated yet again by the war in Ukraine.

We call on once again for multilateral and coordinated policy processes to respond to the food crisis within the CFS.

For more information, media comments or queries please contact Magdalena Ackermann mackermann@sidint.org or Sofía Monsalve monsalve@fian.org.