

Private Sector Mechanism's Special Event "Transforming Food Systems for Improved Nutrition"
Intervention by Ambassador Mario Arvelo, Chair of the Committee on World Food Security

FAO (German Room), 26 April 2019

1. Ten years ago, the Committee on World Food Security was reformed —indeed, we can say it was re-invented— to recognize a harsh reality: that governments' plans and actions were insufficient for achieving the eradication of hunger and malnutrition.
2. This realization, that political will is an essential, indispensable component of any viable approach to such an ambitious goal —but that political will, in and by itself, is not enough— led governments to welcome non-State actors into this cause as equal partners.
3. So, a new kind of arrangement was born: an inter-governmental United Nations body of not one, or two, but of three specialized international agencies, that also is the most inclusive platform for discussing —in openness and transparency— better ways for defeating the most shameful scourge of our time.
4. Inclusiveness is, in point of fact, the first 'guiding principle' of the renewed CFS, as per the 2009 Reform Document.
5. It makes sense to be inclusive, as the challenges of ending hunger and malnutrition necessitate the collective wisdom —as well as the human and financial resource mobilization capacities— of all stakeholders.
6. The trailblazing, revolutionary breakthrough that is this CFS of ours set the stage for the inclusive outlook that led to the approval —five years after the reform— of Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals.
7. This is why we have a Private Sector Mechanism partnering with civil society organizations, as well as with FAO, IFAD, WFP and other UN agencies, research centers, international financial institutions, academia, philanthropies, and many others, as all of us —together— make sense of available knowledge and relevant experience in moving towards zero hunger.
8. And so, this meeting takes place as we discuss and build consensus on voluntary guidelines on Nutrition and Food Systems for approval by the 47th CFS plenary session in October 2020, less than 18 months from now.
9. This is one of the boldest endeavors CFS has undertaken since we agreed on the voluntary guidelines on the Right to Food, the fundamental human right proclaimed by unanimous consent under article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
10. I am delighted to say that my country, the Dominican Republic —the third nation-State to ratify the United Nations charter, after the United States and France— is recorded as voting in recognition of the Right to Food every time, including having it enshrined in our Constitution.
11. In convening this meeting, the private sector is contributing to the conversation with confidence and, in the spirit of CFS reform, with openness, transparency and inclusiveness.
12. The 17 points identified for this dialogue are of fundamental importance for the process of policy coherence and convergence on nutrition and food systems (workstream Chair Dr Liliane Ortega of Switzerland will speak about this in a minute).

13. The first proposed item refers to the need for joining up dissimilar —and sometimes incongruent— policies in this realm;
14. Food losses and waste are responsible for over one third of all food production;
15. Climate change —man-made and man-fuelled— is the single gravest threat not just to food security and nutrition, but to the survival of humankind and, indeed, of all life on Earth;
16. Linking smallholders to markets —especially family farmers— is an absolute requisite for food security;
17. The full empowerment of women and girls —at all points in the food system— represents the clearest road to achieving SDG-2;
18. Capacity building is known to be the surest way to reducing inequalities in the medium and long term;
19. Adequate nutrition is the inseparable complement of food security;
20. Designing policies is an effort doomed to failure in the absence of accurate data, as is proper implementation without monitoring;
21. Science-based food safety is —to put it simply— what prevents nourishment from becoming poison;
22. Trade in food is distinct from item 4 on market links —as I see it— because of the prevalence of unreasonable non-tariff barriers that prevent developing-country producers from accessing developed-country consumers;
23. Addressing consumer education and marketing is critical, as misleading information and outright falsehoods can shape choices;
24. Labeling is also crucial for providing truthful facts to consumers;
25. Evidence-based policies is what CFS is all about (this is an appropriate time to recognize the recently appointed CFS Secretary, Chris Hegadorn, who as a country representative during the reform process led the discussions that created the High Level Panel of Experts);
26. Innovation is essential to all stages of the food system;
27. Item 15 deals with inclusion —you will probably have noticed that this is the concept I have mentioned most repeatedly in my soon-to-finish intervention;
28. Technology —especially access to technology across the so-called Global South— is also of the highest importance in dealing with nutrition and food systems.
29. Lastly, the private sector wishes to discuss partnering for outcomes, which is the title of sustainable development goal 17; I wonder if this is more than a coincidence.
30. I am certain that this event will be instructive, useful and, hopefully, one of many similar such meetings hosted by the private sector and other stakeholders as we move towards agreeing on voluntary guidelines for Nutrition and Food Systems next year.