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THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD: A RESPONSE GROUNDED IN THE HUMAN RIGHT TO FOOD

The future global partnership on agriculture and food (GPAF) should be established as a forum to improve coordination between national and international efforts towards achieving food security in a sustainable fashion, and to monitor progress towards the realization of the right to adequate food. Particular attention therefore should be given not only to the proportion of foreign aid or public budgets dedicated to agriculture (including rural services), but also to the identification of the food insecure in each country, the measures specifically aimed at those groups of the population who are the most food insecure, and to the adoption, by each country, of national strategies, including an appropriate institutional framework, aimed at the realization of the right to food. Increases in agricultural production shall not lead to less hunger, unless the poor and the marginalized – including smallscale farmers, who represent 50% of the hungry in the world –, whose purchasing power is insufficient in order to command the food which is available on the markets, are specifically targeted by public schemes, and may reap the benefits from private investments in agriculture.

Five concrete means of implementing the right to food through the GPAF are the following:

• **Clearly identify the objective of the GPAF.** The right to adequate food, as recognized in international law, should de defined the overarching framework of the GPAF. The GPAF shall gather various UN agencies, the IMF and the World Bank, other international organisations, as well as governments. Two risks result from the coexistence, within such a group, of various agendas and priorities. One risk is dispersion – that coordination remain superficial, and that consistency is not achieved, particularly since each agency will be tempted to develop its own priorities, based on its own understanding of what needs to be achieved to strengthen food security. Another risk is that the agenda of the GPAF is not discussed in a transparent and participatory fashion, but set, instead, by the most important donors in the effort to relaunch agriculture. In order to provide a clear direction to the GPAF, based on identified needs rather than on the priorities of donors, it is necessary to build the GPAF on a robust vision of what it should achieve. That objective should to be realize the right to food of all individuals. Reference to the human right to adequate food in turn means that the dimensions of participation, non-discrimination and attention paid to the most vulnerable, and accountability, should be central.
• **A global strategy for the realization of the right to adequate food.** One of the pillars of the GPAF shall consist in the establishment of a global framework to improve coordination of efforts towards the realization of the right to adequate food. This should develop into a global strategy aimed at the realization of the right to food, in which specific commitments should be made by the actors involved, the implementation of which should be time-bound, measurable, and followed upon through reporting mechanisms allowing on a regular basis for an open discussion of the obstacles faced in the achievement of the goals which are set for each actor.

• **Ensure triangular accountability.** The GPAF should promote accountability, particularly mutual accountability between donors of aid to agriculture and their partners, in accordance with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action. Such accountability should ensure that strategies are not donor-driven, but needs-driven, and that they are aligned with strategies developed at the level of the partner country. A human rights framework requires, however, that we deepen the principles of ownership, alignment and mutual accountability, by shifting our attention to the role of national parliaments, civil society organisations, and the ultimate beneficiaries of aid – the rights-holders – in the implementation and evaluation of foreign aid. It is this triangulation, away from a purely bilateral relationship between governments, which the adoption of a human rights framework requires (see for developments the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, *The role of development cooperation and food aid in realizing the right to adequate food: moving from charity to obligation, A/HRC/10/005*).

• **National strategies for the realization of the right to food as a means to ensure consistency between national priorities and the international environment.** Governments within the GPAF should be encouraged to adopt national strategies for the realization of the right to food, and the GPAF should offer a platform to exchange experiences about how to design and implement such strategies. The adoption of such strategies is recommended by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN doc. E/C.12/1999/5, para. 21), the body tasked to monitor the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Their content is further clarified by the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security adopted by the General Council of the FAO on 23 November 2004. Such strategies serve to ensure that the shaping of the international environmental through rules related to trade and investment, or through development cooperation, are effectively aligned with the definition of priorities in such national strategies.

• **The role of scientific expertise.** The GPAF shall comprise, as one of its pillars, a network of experts providing policy-makers with the best and most recent scientific expertise available. It is vital that this network includes specialists not only of agriculture and agro-ecology, but also nutritionists, climatologists, and social scientists, including human rights experts. It is also vital that the existing expertise is taken as the departure point of future efforts, and acted upon. In particular, the GPAF should build on the conclusions of the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD), the result of 3 years of research and consultations involving 400 experts, which over 50 governments approved at a Johannesburg meeting held in April 2008. The IAASTD demonstrated the need to redirect agricultural science and technology in order to ensure that it addresses the needs of smallscale farmers in developing countries, and that it meets the challenge of sustainability, particularly in the context of climate change. It noted that agricultural science and technology hitherto has mainly benefited large-scale enterprises and has not focused on the specific needs of the rural poor in developing countries. Yet, problems such as availability and cost of good-quality seed, soil degradation, and post-harvest losses, all could be tackled with relatively simple technologies and investments, provided the diffusion of such technologies and such investments are redefined as a priority. The IAASTD process illustrates the need to promote collaboration between scientific experts in the use of technologies with social scientists, who are better equipped to identify the social dimensions of the question of food insecurity, including the gender dimension.

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