NEWS RELEASE

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« In Rome, the Committee on World Food Security reinvents global governance », says UN expert

ROME and GENEVA, 16 October – This week in Rome, the CFS held its first session since it was reformed in November 2009, bringing together 123 governmental delegates, 46 international NGOs, and 11 international agencies. « The recent session of the CFS illustrates how important advances can be achieved when all stakeholders work towards finding solutions, in a spirit that places cooperation above ideological divides », said Mr Olivier De Schutter, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food.

The question of the protection of the rights of landusers was one important part of the discussions held during the session. The CFS encouraged the continuation of the inclusive process of development of Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land and Other Natural Resources, a process launched already through inclusive consultations in different regions of the world. The Special Rapporteur applauded the choice to move swiftly towards the adoption of such guidelines. « Pressures on land are increasing as a result of speculation on farmland, the expansion of agrofuels production, and demographic growth in rural areas », he noted : « In this context, moving swiftly towards protecting the rights of landusers is vital. The livelihoods of peasants, fishers, pastoralists, and indigenous peoples in particular are threatened on a large scale as a result of the global enclosures movement that we are witnessing ». The Special Rapporteur also welcomed the fact that the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment developed by the World Bank and others would be further improved through an inclusive process within the CFS: « The Principles as they stand are weak. They are silent on human rights. They also create the wrong impression that investment in agriculture means large-scale plantations, following shifts in land rights. In fact however, investment should primarily take the form of investment upstream and downstream of the production process, supporting small-scale farmers and helping them to achieve productivity gains. You won’t solve hunger by robbing the poorest from the land on which they depend: you will solve it by strengthening security of tenure and by ensuring a more equitable access to land and natural resources ».

The CFS also agreed that volatility was a serious problem that required policy responses. A High-Level Panel of Experts supporting the work of the CFS shall be requested to study the causes and consequences of price volatility, ways to lessen vulnerability through social and productive safety nets programs and policies, and the effects of climate change on food security and nutrition. « This is key for the future », said De Schutter, who expressed the hope that governments will act on the basis of this consensus. « Climate change and changing weather patterns shall mean more instability in the future. Speculation by commodity index funds on the derivatives markets of agricultural commodities shall worsen the problem. We need both to make agriculture more resilient to these shocks, and to address speculation itself, which destabilizes the markets ». He noted that the climate change negotiations in Cancun in December and the G20 summit of May 2010 would provide opportunities to address these issues: « The consensus found within the CFS should translate into action, and governments should be encouraged to act consistently with this ».
consensus in these various fora for intergovernmental cooperation». While the CFS has no formal decision-making power, De Schutter noted, « the collective will it expresses, with the important legitimacy of the process, will make it difficult to ignore by governments. What we are seeing with the CFS is a new breed of global governance emerging, in which the NGOs are co-authors of international law with governments and international agencies ».

The CFS also discussed the achievements of four countries – Bangladesh, Rwanda, Haiti and Jordan – in improving food security, thus favoring a collective learning process, that constitutes one of the functions of the CFS. Finally, it addressed the situation of countries in protracted crisis – such as the 22 countries identified in the recently released State of Food Insecurity in the World report of the FAO –. These countries were recommended to adopt a comprehensive approach to food security linking the emergency response to support to sustainable livelihoods in a longer-term perspective, particularly through better coordinated multi-stakeholder participation in the development and implementation of country led, comprehensive plans of action. « This emphasis on national action plans, coordination and participation, is particularly welcome », noted the Special Rapporteur: « It is a recognition that we can’t work for people without people ».

ENDS

Press contacts:

- Olivier De Schutter Tel. +32.488 48 20 04

Olivier De Schutter was appointed the Special Rapporteur on the right to food in May 2008 by the United Nations Human Rights Council. He is independent from any government or organization.

Learn more about the mandate and work of the Special Rapporteur: http://www.srfood.org - http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/food/index.htm