



## **Call to Civil Society to Participate in the Process towards the Adoption of Voluntary Guidelines for Land and Natural Resource Tenure by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations - FAO**

### **Summary**

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – FAO – has initiated the process of discussion that should lead to the adoption of Voluntary Guidelines for Land and Natural Resource Tenure. The following text gives a quick overview of this process along with its objectives and structure. It also calls for Civil Society Organizations – CSO – to participate in regional meetings coordinated by the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty – IPC – with the intent of discussing issues specifically relevant to civil society.

### **Background**

Since 2005, the FAO has been working with support from the Government of Finland on raising awareness of the importance of good governance of land and natural resource tenure. The FAO has prepared technical guidelines and other materials on this issue with the help of its partners, including the World Bank, UN-Habitat, Transparency International and International Federation of Surveyors (FIG).

In the next step, the FAO, with the initial support of the German Technical Cooperation GTZ, the World Bank, UN-Habitat and the Government of Finland announces a new initiative to assist countries wishing to develop a formal policy response to the problems of weak governance and corruption. This work is intended to result in *Voluntary Guidelines for Good Governance in Land and Natural Resource Tenure*, an agreement prepared jointly by governments, civil society and international organizations and approved by FAO member nations and other interested parties.

The work will draw upon the FAO's valuable experience in facilitating Voluntary Guidelines such as: *Responsible Fisheries, Forest Fire Management, Responsible Management of Planted Forests, Distribution and Use of Pesticides* and *Right to Adequate Food*.

Inspired by the effective participation of CSO and social movements in the creation of the Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Food and in the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development – ICARRD- the FAO has agreed to apply a similar methodology to the tentative work at hand.

IPC warmly welcomes the FAO's approach and therefore has accepted to engage in the process. The IPC is of the opinion that the current initiative for Voluntary Guidelines for Land and Natural Resource Tenure could become highly relevant in the current context of widespread land grabbing and food crisis. It considers these guidelines to be inherent in the framework of the implementation of ICARRD's final declaration. It believes the adoption of these guidelines will provide orientation on how to apply ICARRD principles, specifically to the issue of land and natural resource tenure. Finally, IPC regards it as absolutely crucial not only for the FAO to

apply a human rights-based approach in its work on access to land and natural resources for food production, but also as part of its strategic framework for action.

### **Objectives**

In general, Voluntary Guidelines are meant to set out principles and internationally accepted standards for responsible practices. They provide a framework that States can use when developing their own strategies, policies, legislation, programmes and activities. The objective of these Voluntary Guidelines is to assist countries and their institutions in the following: improving the governance of land and natural resource tenure; expanding the administration's capacity to alleviating hunger and poverty; enhancing the environment; supporting national and local economic development; and reforming public administration.

### **The Process**

The FAO's process of preparation of the Voluntary Guidelines basically consists of the following three phases:

- 1) Researching for the Voluntary Guidelines: includes consulting regional and thematic research background papers.
- 2) Multi-stakeholder discussion on the requirements for the voluntary guidelines: including Expert Group meetings, Regional meetings and Civil Society meetings
- 3) Preparation and review of the draft of the voluntary guidelines, based on input from meetings: finalization of the voluntary guidelines and adoption by FAO Governing Bodies.

Part of this process has already taken place:

An Expert Meeting was held in Rome in November 2008, with the participation of eight civil society representatives through the IPC.

Two Regional Meetings were held in 2009:

The Southern Africa Regional Meeting was held on 28<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> of September in Windhoek, Namibia. The main partners were the GTZ and the Ministry of Lands and Resettlement of Namibia.

The South East Asia Regional Meeting was organized as part of the 7th FIG - International Federation of Surveyors Regional Conference and was held on the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> of October in Hanoi, Vietnam. The main attending partners were UN-Habitat and FIG.

The IPC was asked to send six participants to each of the first two meetings. Other CSO participants were present as well.

In order to guarantee the participation of civil society during the process, an international facilitating team will be created, which should be representative of the different regions and constituencies.

### **Regional Meetings in 2010**

The Land Tenure Unit of the FAO will organize, in partnership with governments and/or other organizations, nine (9) regional working meetings this year to discuss the nature, scope and issues to be included in the guidelines. The FAO will fund the participation of five (5) CSO representatives to each meeting nominated by IPC.

The Regional Meetings have tentative been scheduled as follows:

London, United Kingdom, 25-26 January (Private Sector Meeting)  
Bucharest, Romania, 22-24 March (Europe Meeting)  
Porto Alegre, Brazil, April  
Amman, Jordan, 2-4 May  
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, May  
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, June  
Fiji Islands, July  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July  
Panama, Panama, July

### **Civil Society Meetings in 2010**

Apart from the regional meetings organized by FAO, there will be four (4) regional meetings to specifically identify issues relevant to civil society. These CSO meetings will be organized by IPC.

The four Civil Society Meetings will be held this year in:

- 1- Kuala Lumpur (tbc), Malaysia, in March
- 2- Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in May
- 3- Porto Alegre, Brazil, in June
- 4- Rome, Italy, in July

The results of these civil society meetings will flow in CSO guidelines on land and natural resources tenure, which will be elaborated upon in the second part of 2010 as an input to the governmental process within FAO.

### **How to participate in this process**

Participation in all meetings is open to all CSO. However, as funds are limited, priority will be given to representatives of rural women's, peasants', indigenous peoples', pastoralists' and fisher folks' organizations. Nonetheless, CSO are encouraged to mobilize funds for participating. Also comments and inputs to the discussion document available (see link below) are very welcome. More details on how to participate throughout 2010 will be provided later.

### **Resources**

The base document for discussion in the CSO Meetings can be found in the following link under the title: "Voluntary Guidelines for Good Governance in Land and Natural Resource Tenure. Civil Society Perspectives"

<http://www.fian.org/resources/documents/others/voluntary-guidelines-for-good-governance-in-land-and-natural-resource-tenure/>

Link to FAO website

<http://www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>

If you are interested in receiving regular information on this process, please send an email to Daniel Gomez

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