

Statement by civil society organizations to the OEWG on the draft Political Declaration

Rome, 11 October 2014

The only reason for ICN2 to take place is to raise the level of political commitments and to advance the implementation strategies to confront the challenges of malnutrition. To raise the bar in terms of norms, effective policies and scale of action.

In this respect, we listened with great concern to yesterday's debate and we were deeply disappointed as the search for a minimum common denominator crossed fundamental lines that have been established by enforced international agreements, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on Rights of the Child, the Declaration of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and ECOSOC's General Comment 12 on the Right to adequate food, among others. Of even greater concern was the reference to the 1992 text of ICN1 as the possible way to re-establish common ground. Yet, some delegates even considered to it as too strong language. Have we gone so low that even language of twenty years ago that should offer us the very minimum floor for this exercise cannot be reaffirmed today? We are equally concerned with what seems to appear as debating strategy aimed at stalling the negotiations and lowering the political significance of the agreement.

If this conference results in the "watering down" of existing agreements and proposes artificial lines of separation in the fulfilment of people's rights, it should rather not take place. As public interest civil society organizations that are actively engaging the ICN2 preparatory process, we would like to reiterate that the unambiguous affirmation of the human right to adequate food and nutrition, right to health, and women's sexual and reproductive rights, among other rights, should be the rationale and central pillar of both the Political Declaration and Framework for Action. Such articulation must include the profound interrelation, in real life, of the right to adequate food with all other human rights and the recognition of adequate diet as the stepping stone to healthy lives across the lifecycle. In this respect, both documents must recognize and promote the unique opportunity for reshaping food systems to improve nutrition for greater health impact and least detrimental planetary consequences, with an understanding of food as being the expression of values, cultures, social relations and people's self-determination.

In this context, the secure access by small-scale holders and family producers to, and control over, productive assets such as land, water, seeds, technical and financial resources, and social protection, particularly for women, is essential for a diversified diet and adequate nutrition and must be convincingly spelled out and integrated in the conference outcome documents. We are therefore deeply concerned with the possible elimination of the essential paragraph on the right to development, self-determination, and sovereignty over natural resources and would strongly advocate for its firm inclusion in the political declaration.