

## **The Second International Conference on Nutrition and the Global Governance of Food and Nutrition**

### **Introduction**

In November 2014 the second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), organised jointly by the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), was held in Rome. The conference aimed to take stock on progress made in the 22 years since the first ICN and to reach consensus on the policy, institutional and governance changes needed at national and global level to address malnutrition.

Civil society organisations and social movements formed a broad coalition in the run-up to the conference to denounce the limited opportunities for participation in the process and express their demands and concerns in relation to the two outcome documents<sup>12</sup> which were negotiated throughout the year preceding the conference and adopted by States during the conference.<sup>3</sup>

Civil society organisations and social movements convened their own pre-forum meeting, in which they shared their experiences and discussed what they considered to be the root causes and major challenges in relation to nutrition, and how these should be addressed by States. On the basis of these discussions, an alternative joint civil society statement was drafted, which was presented during the ICN2.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Available at [www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> See for example:

[http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/detail/civil\\_society\\_demands\\_greater\\_participation\\_in\\_policy\\_processes/;](http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/detail/civil_society_demands_greater_participation_in_policy_processes/)

[http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/detail/cso\\_statement\\_to\\_the\\_icn\\_2\\_open\\_ended\\_working\\_group/;](http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/detail/cso_statement_to_the_icn_2_open_ended_working_group/)

[http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/detail/csos\\_urge\\_policies\\_coherent\\_with\\_the\\_realization\\_of\\_the\\_right\\_to\\_adequate\\_food\\_and\\_nutrition/](http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/detail/csos_urge_policies_coherent_with_the_realization_of_the_right_to_adequate_food_and_nutrition/)

<sup>4</sup> Available at

[http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/detail/civil\\_society\\_and\\_social\\_movements\\_present\\_their\\_final\\_declaration\\_at\\_the\\_icn2/](http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/detail/civil_society_and_social_movements_present_their_final_declaration_at_the_icn2/)

## **The Rome Declaration and Framework for Action**

The Rome Declaration outlines the commitments made by States in the context of the ICN2 to tackle malnutrition, while the Framework for Action provides guidance on strategies and policies States may adopt – on a voluntary basis – for implementing these commitments. While the declaration contains some valid recommendations, such as the emphasis on addressing malnutrition in all its forms and need for policy coherence across sectors, it fails to take into account the root causes of malnutrition from the perspective of those most affected by malnutrition.

It remains silent on the role of corporations in causing hunger and malnutrition, for example, and the urgent need for regulation, are barely touched upon. Nor is there any meaningful analysis of where current food systems have failed and what changes are needed to bring them in line with nutritional needs of individuals and communities within the broader framework of realizing the right to adequate food and nutrition (RtAFN) and food sovereignty.

Only marginal attention is placed on the widespread violations of human rights, and in particular of the rights of women and children, that cause and sustain hunger and malnutrition. Nor is the RtAFN, and human rights more generally, mentioned as framework for nutrition-related policies and interventions, including as accountability framework. While the document recognizes the importance of small-scale food producers in reducing malnutrition, it does not adequately reflect on the challenges they are facing and the fact that they are among the constituencies most affected by hunger and malnutrition, nor does it mention the need to involve them decision making processes affecting them.

Another fundamental shortcoming of the framework for action is its voluntary nature and the fact that it does not provide clear guidance on the global governance set-up and accountability mechanisms needed to ensure States meet their obligations and commitments in relation to nutrition.

## **Civil Society Declaration to ICN2**

In their joint civil society declaration to the ICN2, social movements and CSOs express their regret that ICN2 takes place without proper reflection on past policies failures and without the effective participation of civil society. They reaffirm that food is the “expression of values, cultures, social relations and people’s self-determination” and that the current hegemonic global food system and agro-industrial mode of production not only failed to respond to hunger and malnutrition, but are at the core of the problem.

The Civil Society Statement has been complemented by a social movements’ statement<sup>5</sup> and a vision statement,<sup>6</sup> prepared prior to ICN2.

## **The Way Ahead: Bringing nutrition the CFS, follow up ICN2 and UN Decade of Action on Nutrition**

One central demand of civil society in the context of ICN2 has been for the CFS to assume a prominent role in global governance on nutrition. In early 2015, the CFS secretariat presented a discussion paper in which it outlined the role of the CFS in advancing nutrition. While the effort was welcomed by the civil society mechanism of the CFS (CSM), the paper also raised substantial concerns, including the way it potentially opened the door for voluntary initiatives involving the private sector, such as the Scaling-up Nutrition initiative (SUN), to take on governance functions. A transparent, informed and participatory process for discussing how the CFS should integrate nutrition was requested.

Later in the year, a decision was taken by the CFS to include nutrition as major work stream in the coming years and to create an open-ended working group on nutrition and the establishment of a technical task team (TT) – composed of relevant UN agencies, member states and representatives from the CSM. The TT prepared the terms of reference for the open ended working group that will formulate recommendations on the CFS’ role in advancing nutrition. In addition, a high-level panel of experts (HLPE) report

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<sup>5</sup> Available at [www.fian.org/fileadmin/media/publications/Statement\\_by\\_Social\\_Movements\\_on\\_Nutrition\\_-\\_21\\_Nov\\_14.pdf](http://www.fian.org/fileadmin/media/publications/Statement_by_Social_Movements_on_Nutrition_-_21_Nov_14.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Available at [http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/detail/civil\\_society\\_states\\_its\\_position\\_on\\_the\\_2nd\\_international\\_conference\\_on\\_nutrition/](http://www.fian.org/en/news/article/detail/civil_society_states_its_position_on_the_2nd_international_conference_on_nutrition/)

on nutrition and food systems is planned and will be presented at the 2017 session of the CFS.

This is a crucial moment for bringing nutrition more strongly into the CFS and ensuring that the body lives up to its mandate as global harmonising body and promoter of policy coherence for food *and nutrition* security in the context of the right to adequate food and nutrition framework. At the same time, social movements and CSOs need to closely monitor the process to ensure that it is not captured by corporate interests and that it adopts a holistic perspective on nutrition, grounded in the RtAFN and food sovereignty. This debate is ongoing and GNRTFN members have had and will continue to have an important role to play in it.

Finally, the proposal for the declaration of a UN Decade of Action on Nutrition has been tabled at the UN General Assembly. The decision is to be made soon, and the GNRTFN members will certainly have a role in it as well.