



Food and Agriculture
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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

FAO Submission to the UNFCCC on

Views on the purpose, content and structure of the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner

In response to the UNFCCC call for submissions on “the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner”, FAO is pleased to provide its views on the purpose, content and structure of the platform to inform an open multi-stakeholder dialogue on the operationalization of the platform expected to take place on 16-17 May in conjunction with SBSTA 46 and SBI 46.

FAO welcomes the progress made by UNFCCC in response to the Decision 1/CP.COP21 Paragraph 136 which highlights the need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous people related to addressing and responding to climate change and also the sequence of milestones leading to consideration of the report under a new agenda item - local communities and indigenous peoples platform and conclusion of the consideration at SBSTA 47 by forwarding recommendations for operationalization of the platform at COP23.

As a specialized UN Organization with a mandate of eradicating hunger, FAO highly encourages the involvement of local communities and indigenous peoples in the policy discussions that affect their lives. FAO recognizes the need to strengthen knowledge, technologies, practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change, and welcomes all necessary efforts to establish a platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner.

Indigenous peoples and local communities play a key role in eradicating hunger and have been the guardians of biodiversity, indigenous food systems and high value ecosystems; and a platform that will ensure and channel their effective participation and engagement is a welcome and critical development to ensure that climate change discussions are representative and owned by the very people whose livelihoods are affected by climate change.

Institutional recognition to the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform

FAO recommends that the platform should take the form of a forum where indigenous peoples and local communities can meet face to face, discuss their views and roles in addressing climate change impacts and strategize on their participation in climate change discussions. The platform should strongly link the voices of indigenous peoples and local communities to policy level discussions, giving weight to indigenous and traditional local knowledge and experience in addition to scientifically generated information and analyses.

The platform should have a strong institutional recognition from the parties of the convention and partners. The platform should not be a virtual web based platform or an internet solution. The web based and internet solutions can be tools to exchange good practices, but these should not be the platform itself. FAO views that the local communities and indigenous peoples' representatives

should be directly involved in the ultimate design and leadership of the platform and the participation of indigenous peoples should not be considered as equivalent to that of civil society but rather distinctly. This distinction is already agreed at UN level and therefore a discussion on this topic should not be reopened.

FAO believes that the key for the success of the platform is linked to memberships, ability, technical and operational capacity of the members and funding. The membership of the platform should be rotational with adequate representation of its members from different regions. The ability of its members to communicate back and forth in a reasonable time the positions being discussed and the opinions of the stakeholders at the international forums related to climate change adaptation and mitigation will enhance adequate participation to providing views. The technical capacity and sustained funding support to allow the operations of the platform should be ensured. A strong secretariat and thematic working groups with specific roles and responsibilities need to be defined and agreed by the parties.

Purpose of the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform

FAO believes that the purpose of the platform should be four-fold:

1. Work as a consultative platform to the UNFCCC process through which local communities and indigenous peoples can voice their views and opinions about the different topics being discussed, and ensure that key decisions are taken with deep understanding of the views of the local communities and indigenous peoples.
2. Be a vehicle through which local communities and indigenous peoples can share their diverse practices and experiences in addressing climate change with a view to promoting and strengthening partnerships, developing capacity, and facilitating formal engagement in relevant UNFCCC processes and facilitating greater engagement of local communities and indigenous peoples in national level climate change dialogues and relevant climate actions.
3. Act as a bridge between the UNFCCC policy discussions and actions in accordance with the recommendation of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and incorporation of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and ILO Convention 169.
4. The ultimate goal of the platform should be to influence policy based on timely information and meaningful engagement by local communities and indigenous peoples' representatives, as a two-way process and not merely as a "consultation" processes.

FAO believes that the exchange of experiences and best practices related to climate mitigation and adaptation emanate from the beliefs and practices of indigenous peoples who have preserved the environment in which they live for thousands of years in a manner which is holistic, integrative and realistic. In the majority of cases, indigenous peoples' territories coincide with pockets of remaining biodiversity, de facto demonstrating that their traditional practices and viable livelihoods are in harmony with the environment and have certainly not contributed to climate change. Moreover because of their long and close relationship to forest, pastures, agricultural lands, terrestrial water systems and oceans and high dependence on these resources for their livelihoods and life systems, indigenous peoples and local communities are often severely impacted by the effects of climate change. They are therefore key stakeholders in helping our understanding of the real impacts and determining the most realistic and immediate measures for mitigation, adaptation and building resilience.

Content of the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform

FAO is of the opinion that the content of the platform should not be predetermined by the UN, by UNFCCC or by the member countries. On the contrary, the content for the platform should be

determined by the peoples and organizations that make up the platform. The content of the platform should be consistent with the agenda of discussions and work streams of the UNFCCC, with necessary contributions to be provided by the platform during the inter-sessional periods of the UNFCCC work streams and also with the structure of the platform.

The content of the platform and work programme should also focus on strengthening knowledge and technologies and sharing of best practices on climate change adaptation and mitigation that could contribute to concrete action by the members of the platform. The content could include best practices on natural resources management (forestry, fisheries, agriculture, watershed etc.), climate concerns related to food security, tenure, gender, migration etc.

Structure of the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform

FAO believes that the structure of the platform is crucial for a successful engagement of local communities and indigenous peoples. Should the structure of the platform not be architected in the right way, the end result could be significantly hampered. In this regard, it is advisable to build on the process and high-level study that Professor James Anaya has been coordinating for the UN General Assembly. Even though the final draft is to be discussed at the 71st Session of the General Assembly, the February 2017 draft already outlines many of the key considerations for a mechanism enabling the participation of indigenous peoples in any UN process.

The structure of the platform should have necessary clarification on the role of the convention secretariat in terms of providing support and opportunities for the platform and the relation of the platform itself to other bodies under the convention. There should be adequate caution taken that the role of the convention does not affect the functioning of the platform. The relationship of the platform to national climate change focal points should be clear enough to ensure that the platform is linked to existing national structures that support efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples in implementing climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

FAO's technical support

FAO has a long history of effective engagement with civil society in different forums and platforms (for example through the Forest Farm Facility, the CBFM and through technical work/capacity development on REDD+ among other things on community monitoring and land-planning) which have resulted in well-informed processes, policies and normative work that have effectively incorporated the views of different stakeholders, including civil society, academia, the private sector, foundations, indigenous peoples, community and producer organizations and hybrid organizations.

Some of the most successful platforms and/or high level meetings set up and accompanied by FAO are: The Civil Society Mechanism in support of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS)¹; the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)²; the International Conference on Nutrition organized together with the World Health Organization (WHO); the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources created under the auspices of FAO that currently plays a semiautonomous secretariat function.

In addition, FAO facilitates several technical committees composed of civil society, academia and private sector that accompany technical commissions where member states meet to discuss policies

¹ Civil Society Mechanism for relations to the UN Committee on World Food Security (<http://www.csm4cfs.org/the-csm/>)

² Peoples' food sovereignty (<http://www.foodsovereignty.org/>)

and normative work in relation to food safety (CODEX); fisheries (COFI); forestry (COFO); agriculture (COAG); and plant genetic resources (Commission on Plant Genetic Resources).

The best-known FAO-initiated platform to accompany policy discussions is the CFS that works to ensure food security and nutrition for all. In 2009, after 39 years of operation, the modus operandi of the CFS was reformed due to a realization that the discussions and agenda of the CFS were completely detached from the stakeholders and from society resulting in decisions that did not resonate with the world's citizens. Under the reform, an advisory group with an advisory role to the decision-making CFS Bureau was formed with membership open to civil society, indigenous peoples, the private sector, foundations and UN organizations. As a result, the committee was revitalized and moreover, a series of normative work on extremely complex issues became possible. For example, in 2012 the CFS endorsed the *Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Forestry and Fisheries*³ and more recently, the CFS has facilitated the development of the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems or CFS- RAI.

FAO's support will be based on these experiences and lessons learned in setting up different platforms to accompany and inform varied normative and policy making technical committees related to agriculture and food security. FAO will be pleased to offer technical support to the efforts leading to the local communities and indigenous peoples' platform for the exchange of experiences and sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation in a holistic and integrated manner in three main areas:

1. Technical support to promote effective participatory mechanisms in support of processes related to various work streams of the UNFCCC and to help share technical expertise, case studies and lessons learnt on collaboration and engagement with indigenous peoples. Technical support related to climate change adaptation and mitigation would be available to relevant working groups if established as part of the platform.
2. FAO experts working at decentralized level can support to liaise with local communities and indigenous peoples through existing networks and enhance sharing of best practices on mitigation and adaptation.
3. Hosting some of the initial meetings of the Platform in FAO Rome in concomitance with the CFS or other FAO Technical Committees (COAG, COFO, and COFI) in order for the platform members to get hands on experience in similar facilitation mechanisms for civil society and indigenous peoples.

FAO is willing to offer its technical expertise in setting up of the platform and mechanisms with local communities and indigenous peoples to ensure the connectivity in regards to decision making between the grassroots, regional and global levels. The above-mentioned platforms and mechanism could provide useful starting points for the new platform under discussion. In addition, FAO will put at the disposal of the platform its expertise, technical knowledge and lessons learnt on various topics, among which Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)⁴, the promotion of sustainable forest and farm management as well as the involvement and capacity development of local communities and indigenous peoples in community monitoring and land planning (including through REDD+ processes).

³ FAO, 2012. Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2801e/i2801e.pdf>)

⁴ Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC): An Indigenous Peoples' Right and a Good Practice for Local Communities (FAO 2016) (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6190e.pdf>)