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ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP



Mid-Term Technical Segment of the 25th Senior Officials Meeting

EMG SOM25/mid-term/04d

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Distribution: EMG members

By video-audio conference

from 3:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Geneva time.

Issue note: Proposing a “food systems approach” to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensure food security and good nutrition for all

1) The issue and its context

At the fourth UN Environment Assembly (UNEA 4), the Environment Management Group in collaboration with UN Environment organized a Nexus Dialogue to discuss the importance of sustainable food systems to achieve the 2030 Agenda. In this opportunity, representatives from UN agencies, civil society and private sector highlighted that food systems are failing to provide for the world’s food insecure people both in terms of agricultural yield and nutritional quality. While over 800 million people still go hungry, many more suffer from food system failures to deliver on much needed micronutrients.

Food systems activities are currently imposing increasing pressures on our environment, causing major deforestation, biodiversity loss and greenhouse gas emissions. One third of all food produced is lost or wasted, impacting on food security issues, while wasting the natural resources, labor and energy expended to produce the food. In addition to the environmental problems, food systems are also failing to provide healthy diets for people: the global burden of disease is highly related to unhealthy diets and dietary factors. All these food systems problems are interrelated.

The Nexus Dialogue emphasized that long term food security and nutrition depends largely on a shift towards sustainable food systems, and called for a sustainable food systems approach, with a holistic, integrated way to address food security, environmental health, human well-being and poverty alleviation altogether. At international and national levels there are a number of initiatives, policies and laws to promote sustainable food systems. However, they have the tendency to address the food systems issues in isolation, work in silos, with insufficient collaboration among the actors and domains of the food systems. This has been leading to failure of interventions and more impact on people and the environment.

2) UN wide dimensions

Food systems cut across several disciplines and are present in almost all UN agencies’ agenda. Promoting sustainable food systems together can more effectively help Members States to shift towards sustainable food systems and achieve multiple Sustainable Development Goals. The work of all UN agencies somehow

influences or are influenced by food systems outcomes. A joint UN approach to key food systems issues will help those agencies to advance their mandates.

3) Possible contribution of the EMG

The Environment Management Group could:

- Work within the One Planet Network SFS Programme, a global platform to promote SFS, to bring synergies within the food systems work, including food security, nutrition, food loss and waste and food systems governance;
- Support the implementation of UN Environment resolutions that are related to food systems, more specifically the resolution UNEP/EA.4/L.3 on “Promoting sustainable practices and innovative solutions for curbing food loss and waste”;
- Support the UNGA resolutions that relate to food systems (there is one substantial one from December 2018)
- Support other (including future) food system resolutions by other UN governing bodies
- Work with UNSCN to support the CFS to develop strong Voluntary Guidelines for food systems and nutrition (to be adopted by the CFS plenary in 2020)
- Be a strong voice and advocate for a systemic approach to food and agriculture problems and issues;

It is therefore suggested that a task team be created composed of interested UN agencies to discuss the above suggestions and to agree on areas and actions that can be addressed by the EMG on Sustainable Food Systems.