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Summary record of the 20th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 20 April 2017, at 10 a.m.

President: Ms. Chatardová (Vice-President) (Czechia)

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In the absence of Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe), Ms. Chatardová (Czechia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 11: Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (A/72/63-E/2017/11)

Agenda item 13: Implementation of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B, 57/270 B, 60/265, 61/16, 67/290 and 68/1

1. **Ms. Gornass** (Chair, Committee on World Food Security), introducing the note by the Secretary-General on the main decisions and policy recommendations of the Committee on World Food Security (A/72/63-E/2017/11), said that the forty-third session of the Committee had highlighted the importance of working together to promote food security and sustainable food systems, improve nutrition and address the challenges of climate change. As the foremost inclusive intergovernmental platform for global coordination and policy convergence on food security and nutrition, the Committee gave a voice to all food security and nutrition stakeholders and could play a key role in supporting implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

2. At its forty-third session, the Committee had endorsed a series of policy recommendations on promoting sustainable agricultural development for food security and nutrition and for poverty reduction, including specific recommendations on pastoral, grazing and intensive livestock systems. It had also endorsed a comprehensive set of policy recommendations on connecting smallholders to markets, which had been developed with input from both the private sector and civil society and were aimed at maximizing the role of smallholder farmers in contributing to global food security and nutrition. The General Assembly was requested to consider, endorse and ensure the wide dissemination of the recommendations to all relevant United Nations organizations and agencies, and Member States were requested to support their implementation. At its session, the Committee had also agreed on its strategy for supporting country-led implementation of the 2030 Agenda, principally through policy convergence, lessons sharing and the global review of progress.

3. The 2017 high-level political forum on sustainable development would be particularly relevant to the Committee as it would focus on poverty

eradication and shared prosperity and would review the Sustainable Development Goals related to food security and sustainable agriculture. It was vital to address hunger and poverty simultaneously and that policies recognized the links between food security, inclusive growth and sustainable development. The Committee was stepping up its contribution to the global fight against malnutrition and was supporting implementation of the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the Framework for Action, adopted at the Second International Conference on Nutrition, and the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition. It was benefiting from the relocation from Geneva to Rome of the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition to support its work.

4. An important part of the Committee's work was reviewing global progress on food security and nutrition; it relied on the global monitoring undertaken by the United Nations system. A more holistic approach to monitoring and evaluating progress towards achieving the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals and other targets was needed, and the new Food Insecurity Experience Scale was welcomed as an improved index to measure all forms of malnutrition.

5. The Committee had requested a report from the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition on multi-stakeholder partnerships to finance and improve food security and nutrition, which would be issued in 2018. It also looked forward to receiving the Panel's report on sustainable forestry for food security and nutrition, to be issued in June 2017, and its note on critical and emerging issues for food security and nutrition, to be issued by the end of 2017. Those reports would inform the Committee's future work.

6. The Committee had held a forum on urbanization, rural transformation and the implications of changes in rural and urban settings for global food security and nutrition, and was compiling experiences and policy approaches that had proved effective in addressing food security and nutrition in the context of those changes. It had endorsed terms of reference that provided guidance to food security and nutrition stakeholders on the sharing of experiences and good practices in implementing its decisions and recommendations. In addition, it had held a global thematic event to enable the sharing of experiences and a taking stock of the application of the Committee's Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security. The event had highlighted both good practices and challenges in the application

of the Voluntary Guidelines, and many stakeholders had stressed the importance of establishing inclusive multi-stakeholder platforms, empowering all parties and ensuring strong political engagement as essential elements for the successful application of the Voluntary Guidelines. Lastly, a plan of action would be developed to address the recommendations resulting from the independent evaluation of the Committee, which reflected the Committee's commitment to continuous improvement.

7. **Ms. Oenema** (Coordinator, United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition) said that the work of the Standing Committee on Nutrition was a follow-up to the commitments made at major global conferences such as the International Conference on Nutrition and the World Health Assembly, and its work had become even more important in the context of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition as the Committee had been called upon to support that Decade as one of the coordinating bodies.

8. The Committee had been established in 1977 with the mandate to review the overall direction, scale, coherence and impact of the United Nations system response to nutrition problems; serve as a point of convergence to harmonize United Nations policies and activities; assist in developing and harmonizing concepts, policies, strategies and programmes in the United Nations system; assess progress towards achievement of objectives; and lay down guidelines for mutually supporting action at the United Nations agency and country levels. The Committee had translated that original mandate into a new strategic plan for 2016-2020 with four objectives: maximize United Nations policy coherence and advocacy on nutrition; support consistent and accountable delivery by the United Nations system; explore new and emerging nutrition-related issues; and promote knowledge-sharing across the United Nations system.

9. The Committee was open to all United Nations agencies having a significant interest or engagement in nutrition, and it worked on the basis of the subsidiarity principle, meaning that it remained lean and delegated responsibility to its members to prevent duplication of work and ensure coherence. As a United Nations body, the Committee respected United Nations principles such as a human-rights-based approach to nutrition and universality. The Committee's work covered all countries and it worked to address all forms of malnutrition. As a result, intersectoral work was vital to ensure that all issues were addressed. The Committee focused on global issues that related to local realities and needs, and was engaged in policymaking, not implementation.

10. In terms of achievements, the Committee had produced policy and discussion papers on subjects such as climate change and nutrition, and the use of schools as a system for improving food and nutrition security. The papers were designed to foster debate, improve understanding and policymaking, and encourage commitment at the national level. It had also provided peer reviews of member policies for the purpose of seeking synergies and avoiding overlap between agencies. Regarding advocacy on nutrition, the Committee was actively engaged with numerous other platforms such as the Committee on World Food Security to support and improve the different agendas on nutrition, and to ensure that nutrition was integrated and fully addressed in all committees and programmes.

11. To support consistent and accountable delivery by the United Nations system, the Committee was developing and updating global guidance on nutrition for effective delivery by United Nations agencies. It was also working to ensure that its global-level policy work had an impact at the country level, was engaging with implementing bodies on the ground such as the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and was doing outreach work to make sure that its work had the desired impact.

12. The Committee was exploring and fostering debate on new and emerging nutrition-related issues, as well as on difficult issues such as trade and nutrition, in order to encourage new policies, and was collaborating with the academic community. To promote knowledge-sharing across the United Nations system and beyond, the Committee published all its policy papers on its website and had introduced an electronic system of alerts to inform both members and the wider nutrition community. The Committee was committed to following up on global nutrition conferences and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and was working to ensure that action at the global level made sense at the country level. The United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition was encouraging countries to implement recommended nutrition policies, and the Committee was at the centre of that endeavour as it coordinated the United Nations system. The Committee would continue to identify lessons learned, good practices and challenges as it sought to improve coordinated delivery.

Panel discussion: Climate change and nutrition

13. **The President** said that the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change in 2015 had created momentum for concerted action. Given the interlinkages of the

commitments made in 2015 and the comprehensive nature of the universal and transformative goals and targets, their effective implementation required a coordinated and coherent approach at all levels.

14. Climate change was one of the greatest challenges facing all nations and had environmental, economic and social consequences. Addressing that challenge would involve trade-offs as countries came up with innovative ways to promote environmental sustainability while also promoting implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Climate change had increased the risk of weather-related natural disasters, which jeopardized livelihoods and access to adequate food, clean water and sanitary conditions, which were essential for good nutrition. Unless action was taken, some 35 to 122 million people could fall into poverty owing to the negative impact of climate change on incomes in the agricultural sector. Urgent measures were needed to address the famine affecting South Sudan, Nigeria, Somalia and Yemen. While saving lives was the top priority, long-term resilience would be crucial to prevent future famines. However, that could be achieved only through an integrated approach to implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

15. The high-level event on climate change and the sustainable development agenda, held in March 2017, had invigorated the political momentum on climate change and reinforced synergies between climate action and delivering on the 2030 Agenda. One of the strongest messages from the meeting had been the need to urgently scale up efforts and actions on climate change. The event had also underscored the importance of smart policy and regulatory frameworks to curb greenhouse gas emissions, which could also lead to cross-cutting dividends for other Sustainable Development Goals such as those relating to public health, gender equality and sustainable economic growth.

16. **Mr. Obermeyer** (Deputy Director, World Health Organization (WHO) Office at the United Nations), moderator, said that areas with weak health infrastructure, which were mostly in developing countries, were the least able to cope with extreme events and ecosystem changes resulting from climate change. Those were the same areas that suffered from malnutrition and undernourishment, with women and children bearing the most severe consequences, including not only communicable diseases, but also non-communicable diseases linked to unhealthy diets.

17. **Ms. Oenema** (Coordinator, United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition), panellist,

accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that the existing food system not only left hundreds of millions of people hungry, malnourished or overweight, but was also one of the main contributors to climate change and environmental degradation. It was responsible for about a quarter of all greenhouse gas emission, 70 per cent of fresh water use and 60 per cent of biodiversity loss. A shift towards animal-based diets would only raise those figures. Changes in temperature and precipitation brought about by greenhouse gas emissions led to increased global food prices, which in turn caused people to turn to cheaper nutrient-poor and calorie-rich foods that led to malnourishment and obesity.

18. Breaking that vicious cycle was the impetus behind the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), which had been conceived in the context of target 2 of Sustainable Development Goal 2 on ending all forms of malnutrition and Goal 12 on ensuring sustainable consumption. The Second International Conference on Nutrition had presented a number of recommendations designed not only to improve nutrition, but also to promote sustainability. They included strengthening local production; promoting crop diversification; reducing waste through improved storage, preservation and transport; increasing resilience in crisis-prone areas; and developing international guidelines on healthy diets. Such diets would include limited meat consumption, more plants and seafood from non-threatened stocks, balanced energy intake and reduced waste. So far, only a few countries — notably Brazil, Germany, Qatar and Sweden — had included sustainability criteria in their national dietary guidelines.

19. An overall transition to more nutritious and diverse diets would bring the co-benefits of both improving health and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The promotion of sustainable and healthy diets should be part of the climate agenda and regarded as a financing priority. Investment, research and coherent public policies were needed across all relevant sectors, from production to consumption. The Sustainable Development Goals provided a framework for joint action to nourish the world sustainably.

20. **Mr. Obermeyer** (Deputy Director, WHO Office at the United Nations) said that the outcomes of the Second International Conference on Nutrition had clearly demonstrated the need for a shift towards more sustainable food systems. However, market forces were not always conducive to affordable and nutritious food in poor and less populated areas. He wondered if any drivers had been developed to ensure access to healthy diets in underserved communities.

21. **Ms. Oenema** (Coordinator, United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition) said that the study conducted had focused more on mitigation aspects in upper-middle-income countries, but it also touched on lower-income countries. One finding had been that diversification of production could lead to a more diverse diet.

22. **Ms. Gornass** (Chair, Committee on World Food Security; and Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)), panellist, said that while farming was a contributing factor for climate change, sustainable farming could be part of the solution. Urgent action was needed both to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impact of greenhouse gasses already in the atmosphere. Climate change concerns could provide an impetus to rediscover traditional crops, which were often more resilient and could help to diversify diets. Food security and healthy diet concerns needed to be integrated into climate change policies. Examples of the effect of climate change on nutrition could be seen in Somalia, where ongoing drought had resulted in half of the population suffering from undernourishment, and in Nigeria, where famine related to the drying up of Lake Chad had, inter alia, helped to create conditions conducive to the rise of Boko Haram.

23. In 2012, the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on Global Food Security had published a report on the interlinkages between climate change and food security and nutrition that had documented the effects of climate change on food availability and quality. Temperature increases, decreases in rainfall, extreme weather events and water shortages could all result in reduced agricultural productivity. The discussion informed by that report had resulted in a set of policy recommendations that had called, inter alia, for the integration of climate change concerns into national food security and nutrition programmes. The Committee had contributed a number of policy products, including a set of voluntary guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests; principles for responsible investment in agriculture and food systems; policy recommendations on food security and social protection; and the recommendations on water and sustainable agricultural development. It was imperative to build food systems that addressed climate change, reduced waste and promoted a shift to sustainable production and consumption patterns. Both the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda had recognized the centrality of food security and nutrition to the climate and development agendas.

24. **Ms. Elver** (Special Rapporteur on the right to food), panellist, said that most people were unaware of the connection between what they ate and climate change. Agriculture was both a perpetrator and a victim of climate change. Food policy needed to strike a delicate balance between reducing climate impacts and ensuring the right to adequate food. Famine and drought had always been present. However, they were becoming more frequent due to climate change, not to mention man-made factors, especially in Africa. A greater proportion of climate-related financing should be directed towards the food system. Food policy needed to take into account climate change and respond to the voices of the enormous number of people who were food insecure.

25. **Mr. Obermeyer** (WHO Office at the United Nations) said that only 1 per cent of climate financing was directed towards health, and there was no information on what percentage was directed towards nutrition. He wanted to hear more about successes with agroecology, notably in Cuba and Brazil.

26. **Ms. Elver** (Special Rapporteur on the right to food) said agroecology could make a major contribution to addressing climate change. Productivity increases often involved increased water use and soil degradation, and big agribusiness tended to increase greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, agroecology tried to use the ecosystem without outside inputs. Local production not only helped to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but also offered opportunities to promote local rights and gender equality. Research on agroecology would be an excellent use of climate change funding.

27. **Mr. Beukeboom** (Climate Envoy of the Netherlands), panellist, speaking via video link, said that for many people, the issue of climate change was still too abstract to be of interest. It was therefore essential to draw links between climate matters, in particular those relating to the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the real economy and provide actors with clear opportunities to reduce the impact of their activities on the climate. The Netherlands had experience in that regard that other States could adapt to their contexts. It had held a national climate summit in 2016, at which representatives of the private sector, civil society and local government had met to discuss the relevance of climate change and the Paris Agreement to them. Deals signed at the summit represented an additional reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 17.6 megatons. That experience showed that many people were willing to act if they were given the opportunity to do so, and that national summits

could be an effective way of bringing the international momentum from the Paris Agreement to the national level. A similar event, the National Food Summit, had been held in 2017. On that occasion, stakeholders involved in agriculture, food production, food supply, food retail and the restaurant and catering industries had pledged to make the Dutch food sector a leader in safe, healthy and sustainable nutrition within 10 years, including by reducing its inputs, waste and pesticide use. They had also committed to eliminate human rights abuses and environmental damage from their supply chains, which would have an impact beyond national borders.

28. Another successful initiative had been the establishment of the Dutch Sustainable Food Alliance, which had been in place even before the signing of the Paris Agreement. The Alliance, whose members included agricultural and food organizations and supervisory authorities, aimed to promote innovation and enhance resource efficiency through the reutilization of production residues and waste. Experience had shown that progress was best made when a number of actors worked together to find solutions and create change. Approaches based solely on the imposition of prescriptive measures by the Government were generally far less effective, not least because the best ideas usually came from actors within the industry, who were best placed to see where their production processes and value chains could be adapted to enhance efficiency. The alliance model, which could easily be replicated in any context or State, thus provided a means of facilitating effective action by the many stakeholders that were willing to act to combat climate change but did not know where to begin.

29. One of the specific measures undertaken by companies in his country was to quietly replace animal protein with plant protein in many prepackaged foods, which comprised a significant proportion of supermarket food sales. The products had continued to sell well. That was a very simple way to combat climate change by promoting a transition from animal to plant protein, as there was no need to adopt new regulations.

30. While the Dutch nutrition centre's guidelines did not refer explicitly to climate change, they did mention the environmental impact of diet, food purchasing habits and food preparation methods, and a tool enabling citizens to estimate the carbon footprint of their dietary habits was available on its website. Evidence showed that people changed their behaviour as they became aware of the impact of their diet on the climate.

31. It was important to give Governments, academia and the agricultural sector a vision for the future of the food sector. Even ordinary citizens had a fairly accurate picture of what the energy sector would look like in 2050, but that was not the case when it came to food. For example, the idea of finding substitutes for beef seemed both unrealistic and unappealing to many people. There was therefore a need for greater discussion of the matter. He intended to facilitate a national-level debate in the Netherlands and attempt to bring that to the international level at the 2018 Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

32. There was great value to be found in partnerships and in learning through experience and experimentation, as no single solution would enable the full implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations could facilitate the necessary dialogue, promote understanding of the discussions that were taking place and connect stakeholders across borders to enable them to share their experiences. Despite the evidence of the effects of climate change on health, actors often did not feel a real need to prevent climate change. However, they were generally very willing to contribute to climate objectives if doing so also helped them to better achieve their primary goal. It was therefore important to link the work that needed to be done from the climate perspective to the objectives of stakeholders in the food industry, for example by showing companies how they could reduce their waste or energy intake in order to increase their profits while also contributing to climate-related goals.

33. **Ms. Mucavi** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that FAO had been making an effort to ensure that the work of the Council and the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition met the expectations of Member States. The nexus between climate change and nutrition was central to the work of FAO, as climate change undermined efforts to achieve food security and exacerbated undernutrition. Climate change affected not only the quantity of food available but also the quality of food, as increased carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere reduced the nutritional value of food. For example, it reduced levels of zinc, iron and protein and increased the levels of starch and sugar in wheat, rice and certain legumes.

34. FAO was helping States adopt sustainable practices and develop and implement national plans for the integration of climate change adaptation measures into relevant national planning and budgeting processes. It was also assisting them in the

development of dietary guidelines. Many States already took sustainability into account in their national guidelines. In order to ensure food security and adequate nutrition for present and future generations, it would be necessary to adjust policy frameworks, improve the efficiency of water use and soil management practices, reduce food loss and waste, recycle nutrients, increase food and diet diversity and promote healthier diets with a smaller carbon footprint.

35. **Ms. Oenema** (Coordinator, United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition), panellist, said that the Paris Agreement provided a basis for much-needed cooperation between the nutrition and climate communities. While the Agreement made little reference to nutrition, it did mention the right to health and call for the development of action plans to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. Nutrition-minded actors should work to have nutrition taken into account in that regard, as better nutrition would have benefits for the health of populations and the climate.

36. Diversifying agricultural production would provide for diverse diets and increase global resilience to climate change. Agricultural investment, which was currently focused on maize, rice and wheat, should therefore be diversified. If the current state of affairs continued, there would be serious consequences in terms of food security if those three crops were negatively affected by climate change.

37. **Ms. Gornass** (Chair, Committee on World Food Security; and Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), panellist, said that partnerships would be essential in efforts to solve problems related to climate change, nutrition and food security, as the implementation of any decisions taken would require the involvement of the many stakeholders. It might be worth expanding the model of the Committee on World Food Security, the only United Nations committee that comprised representatives of the private sector, civil society, financial institutions, research institutions and United Nations agencies, to other committees. Having such a variety of participants meant that discussions were lengthy, but it ensured that the views and interests of all parties were taken into consideration and resulted in more effective action. The Dutch experience demonstrated that the model was also effective at the national level.

38. Four States in Africa were currently suffering from famine, and the crisis was expected to spread to other States in the region. Conflict was a major factor in the case of three of the countries currently affected, but the root causes of those conflicts were related to

climate change. All stakeholders must therefore work together to urgently address the climate issues that were having such a serious impact on food security and nutrition, as many people were now dying. The affected countries had not contributed to the effects of climate change and did not have the capacity to address the effects of climate change without support from the international community.

39. **Ms. Elver** (Special Rapporteur on the right to food) said that despite the positive developments that had taken place in relation to the Paris Agreement, there was still a lack of clarity on how certain elements would be implemented. Governments, civil society and the private sector must all play their part. While the inclusion of a reference to human rights in the Paris Agreement was a step forward, it was disappointing that there was no mention of the right to adequate food, as ignoring that perspective could result in the adoption of harmful climate policies. For example, the right to food had been undermined by certain greenhouse gas emission reduction projects and by policies promoting the use of biofuel. It was therefore important to engage in in-depth discussions with Governments. The Committee on World Food Security was doing good work to help Governments develop solid policies.

40. **Mr. Beukeboom** (Climate Envoy of the Netherlands) said that practically every sector would have to become climate neutral, but that would be particularly challenging for the agricultural sector. It was still not clear what changes and innovations would be needed or what the path to sustainability would look like.

41. The multi-stakeholder composition of the Committee on World Food Security worked well and could serve as a model for other United Nations committees. The Council might wish to consider inviting private sector representatives to future meetings in order to gain a better understanding of what was involved in translating policies into practice.

42. The annual \$100 billion committed under the Paris Agreement to combat climate change would not be sufficient to achieve the objectives the Agreement. However, there was a mismatch between what had been termed climate finance and the actual amount of money that could be invested in such a way as to promote sustainability. For example, the pension funds for Dutch civil servants alone had a combined portfolio of around \$400 billion. Investing money in ways that would have long-term financial and environmental returns would unlock many billions of dollars that could be invested in the climate.

43. **The President**, in her concluding remarks, said that policies that promoted healthy and sustainable diets would reduce the carbon footprint of food production and save lives by helping to prevent diet-related diseases. There was a need for greater investment and research into sustainable and healthy diets and for coherent public policies across relevant sectors. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provided a crucial framework for joint action in that regard. The discussion that had taken place at the current meeting would inform the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which would undertake an in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goal 2, on ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture, in July 2017.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.