



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR THE UNITED NATIONS FOOD SYSTEMS SUMMIT

Information Note July 2020

As a part of the *Decade of Action for the SDGs*, the **United Nations Secretary-General is convening a Food Systems Summit in 2021** aimed at empowering people to leverage food systems as accelerators of progress to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The following Information Note follows up on the previous one issued in April is intended to provide an update on the status of the Summit process, particularly in light of the outcomes of the first meeting of the Food Systems Summit Advisory Committee.

RECENT UPDATES

First Meeting of the Summit Advisory Committee: The UN Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) chaired the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Committee on 7 July 2020. In opening the meeting, the DSG noted the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs by 2030, can help motivate and accelerate progress, although noting the current COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc on people’s lives and disrupting the systems on which we depend.

The Food Systems Summit (FSS) should serve as a turning point in the world’s journey to achieve all of the SDGs. It should be “not just another summit”, but a broad, global, inclusive, all-of-society engagement process. The process can help to answer the UN Secretary-General’s call to “build back better” from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, since the Secretary-General made the announcement on World Food Day last year, the world has dramatically changed – but the need and urgency of this issue has not.

The DSG further recognized the joint leadership by the three Rome-based Agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP) to bring the concept of this Summit, thanked them for their initial investment and looked forward to their continued collaborative leadership and support.

The Special Envoy for the Food Systems Summit presented the vision and objectives of the Summit, expressing a desire that the global community would be able to look backwards from 2030 and see the Summit as the moment where the human relationship with food, and the associated systems that underpin its availability and access, was changed.

The Special Envoy provided an overview of the narrative for the Summit, starting with underlining the need for action and that experts around the world have affirmed the opportunity within food systems to find game-changing solutions. As noted in the recent [Policy Brief by the Secretary-General](#), the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has also



highlighted many of our challenges and the fragility of our systems, particularly for the most marginalized populations, as well as the interconnectedness of global challenges. The intention from the outset is therefore to make the FSS both a “People’s Summit” and a “Solution’s Summit”.

The Special Envoy presented the Summit’s objectives, expected outcomes, areas of work including the Action Tracks, the roadmap to the Summit moment, and updates on considerations on the Summit venue and timing as well as on resource mobilization. The leads of the other Summit support mechanisms, namely the Scientific Group and the UN Task Force, also provided brief overviews of their intended approach and relationship with the overall process. The concept of the Champions Network was also introduced.

Advisory Committee members welcomed the high level of ambition, the intention to make the Summit both a “People’s Summit” and a “Solution’s Summit” and the accompanying work plan. Several Committee members, both government and non-government alike, offered to help leverage their networks in support of the Summit process at the earliest opportunity. While some members noted that certain aspects of the work plan could be strengthened and nuanced, these should not stand in the way of moving forward. Members recognized the need for leadership and enhanced political will by all stakeholders to mobilize greater ambition and accelerated action. The Special Envoy was encouraged to continue to maintain a focus on country level ownership and engagement of the most vulnerable, while also recognizing the regional and global nature of the exercise. There was strong appreciation for the evidence-based approach being taken by the Special Envoy.

It was acknowledged that the Advisory Committee will continue to work as a critical forum for feedback, advice and discussion throughout the Summit process. The DSG encouraged members to support the process to the fullest extent possible, both through their engagement and by investing resources in its success. Going forward, the Committee will meet quarterly, but it was recognized that dialogue and engagement among members should be a continuous exercise. The next quarterly meeting of the Committee will take place in early October ahead of World Food Day.

Other Engagement Opportunities: The Special Envoy and the Summit Secretariat continue to proactively engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including those engaged in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), to raise awareness and to lay the ground for an inclusive process ahead.

These engagements have included a large number of engagements with Member States other stakeholders. Also including a range of partner-led events, such as the High-level Political Forum (HLPF) where the Special Envoy provided keynote remarks in the session on “Mobilizing international solidarity, accelerating action and embarking on new pathways to realize the 2030 Agenda and respond to COVID-19: African countries, Least Developed Countries and Landlocked Developing Countries.”



Organizational Matters: The Secretariat for the Food Systems Summit is now officially online and operational. The Deputy to the Special Envoy, [Mr. Martin Frick](#), is on board and will be posted to Rome as soon as conditions allow. WFP has taken on the role of hosting the Trust Fund to support the Summit and the Fund is now fully operational. Initial financial contributions by Switzerland, IFAD and WFP have been committed. The Office of the Special Envoy continues to collaborate closely with the Rome-based Agencies to mobilize resources. Member States and other potential donors are encouraged to be in touch with the Office of the Special Envoy in this regard.

An initial Summit webpage can be found at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/food-systems-summit-2021/>, and both the Envoy and the Summit Secretariat are active on social media. All stakeholders are encouraged to engage with the Summit and Special Envoy through these channels for regular updates and information-sharing as the preparatory process continues and movement towards the Summit builds.

- Twitter – @foodsystems @Agnes_Kalibata
- Instagram – unfoodsytms

NEXT STEPS

Following the Advisory Committee, the Summit is now shifting into a new phase focused on increased global engagement through all aspects of the vision and work plan for the Summit process. In the weeks ahead, the Summit Secretariat intends to:

- Support the more formalized initiation or work of the support structures: Scientific Group, UN Task Force and the Champions Network;
- Organize a formal public briefing for Member States and other stakeholders;

By the fall, it is expected that the Action Tracks, Champions Network and the plans to hold “food systems dialogues” in all countries of the world will be launched. A more comprehensive website should also be in place by late September. Complementing the Summit’s website and social media channels, a powerful digital platform will provide a universally accessible, dynamic, and should also be online later this year. It will intentionally look to build on and intersect with existing platforms to ensure scale of reach and sustainability after the Summit.

The Executive Office of the Secretary General continues to reflect on considerations for the Summit venue and timing, recognizing that COVID-19 raises several challenges. However, it is a priority that the Summit is inclusive of all countries of the world and ideally takes place by late 2021 in order to serve a critical role in the Decade of Action and the SG’s call to build back better. A decision will be made by this fall.

For queries, contact foodsystemssummit@un.org

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