

## ECOSOC INTEGRATION SEGMENT ON SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION 2014

### Side event on “Food security and the rural-urban nexus: using the Voluntary Guidelines on tenure to achieve sustainable urbanization and improved resource efficiency”

#### CONCEPT NOTE

27 May 2014.

#### BACKGROUND

Food security, whether in major cities or smaller rural centers, is a crucial measure of the survival and sustainable prosperity of their populations. Achieving food security requires policies and mechanisms for promoting and sustaining food production, processing, transportation, and marketing, particularly as urbanization expands into rural areas so far used for agricultural activities. Urban and peri-urban food security is also underpinned by strong and healthy linkages between rural and urban areas, economies, and markets, supported by sustainable and inclusive governance of the natural resource base underpinning both rural areas and cities. In this context, land use planning, land access, and land management have a particularly important role in both enabling food security and sustaining healthy and mutually beneficial rural-urban linkages more broadly. This has to be addressed in a context of decreasing land availability. “The growing demand for good, feed, fuel and materials is increasing the demand for land resources. At the same time, mismanagement and degradation are reducing the amount of production land available (International Resource Panel/IRP 2014).”

The strengthening of urban and rural linkages – including around land use and governance - requires partnerships between national, subnational and local governments, civil society in urban and rural communities, and the private sector. A critical element involves is the recognition of the importance of city-region food systems for sustainable food security.

Rural-urban linkages are dynamic and changes to urban areas modify the access that people – women and men in different ways - have to land and how they can use it, and they affect that land’s role as a factor of production and its environmental conditions. Land conversion for urban construction or urban productive sectors often results in loss of livelihoods and employment, further fuelling rural to urban migration, which often add to unsustainable urbanization and expanding slums. The sustainable developments of urban areas, along with their rural environs, require that competing demands for social, economic and environmental uses of land are dealt with in an integrated manner.

The *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security* (Voluntary Guidelines), endorsed by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on 11 May 2012, are an unprecedented international soft law instrument in the area of tenure. All countries have been explicitly encouraged to consider implementing the Voluntary Guidelines by resolutions of the United Nations General

Assembly<sup>1</sup>, the G20, the G8, and the RIO +20 Declaration. They therefore provide a critically important framework document for future work and activities of the global community in relation to tenure. The Voluntary Guidelines seek to ensure that land benefits all, especially vulnerable and marginalized people, with the goals of achieving food security and progressive realization of the right to adequate food, poverty eradication, sustainable livelihoods, social stability, housing security, rural development, environmental protection and sustainable social and economic development and sustainable rural and urban development. The Voluntary Guidelines encompass broadly, both urban and rural tenure relations, however further details have to be developed to adequately guide the urban constituencies to respond to challenges of rapid urbanization and food security.

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the side event are to:

- Strengthen the dialogue among Member States, UN Organizations and other stakeholders, including civil society and private sector, on the rural-urban nexus, particularly in the context of food security, with a view to sustainably strengthen food security and environmental management in all areas, as well as in the context the 10YFP for Sustainable Consumption and Production.
- Explore ways in which the *Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security* (VGGT) can support sustainable urbanization by addressing rural-urban linkages and land conversion and unsustainable land use accompanying urbanization, through a holistic and inclusive treatment of urban and rural tenure requirements for social, economic and environmental uses of land and its impact on other natural resources.
- Exchange ideas and foster discussion on how to strengthen food systems, addressing both consumption and production that can sustainably support rural and urban populations and the complexities that arise in a demographically changing environment.

## PROGRAM DETAILS

The event will be chaired by the representative of a national government that has been engaged in the VGGT process and feature a short panel discussion of distinguished, expert speakers; participants will include high level representatives of governments, the UN system, civil society and the private sector. There will be an interactive dialogue amongst the panelists and participants.

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<sup>1</sup> A/67/228 UN General Assembly resolution on Agriculture Development and Food Security, which encourages countries to “give due consideration to implementing the Voluntary Guidelines (VGs) on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security.” In addition the resolution also “requests the relevant entities of the United Nations system, in accordance with their respective mandates and in the most cost-effective manner, to ensure the speedy dissemination and promotion of the Guidelines”

## **ORGANIZERS and CO-SPONSORS**

The event is sponsored by FAO, IFAD, UNEP and UN-HABITAT.

## **TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

- The role of policies and mechanisms in strengthening rural-urban linkages to achieve sustainable food security in urban areas.
- The importance of city region food systems for sustainable food security and urban development, including issues such as food loss and waste in the processing and transport chain.
- The implementation of knowledge-sharing platforms in building partnerships and promoting coordination among different partners and stakeholders or preferably the use of existing platforms and networks to highlight the urban-rural food security issue.
- The potential for the VGGT to be used as a framework to manage the spatial aspects of rural urban linkages, including through holistic, integrated and sustainable approaches to address rural and urban land requirements for food production and this impact on other local resources.