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Statement by the Spokesperson of the Civil Society Consultation

1. Good day to all of you. I'm Anuka de Silva from Sri Lanka. Today, I speak in behalf of around 100 representatives from civil society from 18 countries, belonging to 65 organizations and movements at the national and regional levels, who joined the online CSO Consultation on CSO inputs to the 37th FAO APRC last January 23 to 24, 2024. We represent smallholder family farmers and farmworkers, landless, rural women and youth, fisherfolks, forest dwellers, pastoralists and herders, Indigenous Peoples, urban poor, consumers, and NGOs.
2. The 2030 agenda of "leaving no one behind," will remain a rhetoric as long as structural roots of poverty and inequality are not addressed. While small-scale food producers, family farmers and their communities feed 70 to 80 percent of the world's population, they remain the most vulnerable to social and economic marginalization and even starvation. Our small-scale fishing communities are continuously facing existential challenges, yet it is fishing and related industries that provide the main or supplementary source of employment, livelihood, and income for many of the region's poor.
3. It was the green revolution that started in the '60s that introduced unsustainable agricultural practices in Asia and continues to cause serious harm on small-scale men and women farmers and food producers, on our health, and our environment. Neoliberal policies and industrial agriculture have led to the depletion of natural resources while reaping profits and concentrated power in a few transnational corporations. The multiple crises in health, food, climate and ecological are manifestations of the failure of a food system that prioritizes profits over people.
4. Climate change, which is responsible for severe drought and flooding across the region, poses the most serious threat to food production. Along with unsustainable agriculture practices and biodiversity degradation, climate change has diminished the ability of family farmers and peasants to produce food, causing food insecurity.
5. As a first step towards genuinely fixing the broken food system, we need to completely change our development paradigm. The current narrow focus on increasing production to achieve food security is inadequate and could be dangerous. We need a radical shift towards a genuine and holistic sustainable food system. We believe that agro-ecology could counter corporate-led agri-food system

This and other documents can be consulted at www.fao.org

and promote small-scale family farming. It encompasses a set of sustainable, equitable principles together with scientific disciplines that contribute to achieving a sustainable, equitable, and secure agri-food system.

6. The magnitude and urgency of the climate and ecological crises compounded by the pandemic and health crisis requires decisive action, more investments, progressive climate laws, locally adapted and appropriate technologies, stop dependence on fossil fuels, and equitable society. This evolution is an invitation to work towards the promotion of a society more respectful of people and the earth.

7. The CSO Consultation, puts forward the following recommendations to FAO and its Member States:

- a. Broaden and deepen analysis, foresight and outlook on the current food security situation by:
 - i. Looking at socio-economic conditions of food producers, farmers, fishers, and herders as well as the land and agrobiodiversity situation.
 - ii. Interrogating the consequences of industrialization, neo-liberal policies and corporate consolidation on the food security situation of the region, and the root causes of rural poverty, food insecurity, and undernutrition.
 - iii. Depicting the real-world implications of environmental changes, new and emerging technologies, and trade competition, particularly to us, small-scale producers who encounter significant challenges.
- b. Prioritize the empowerment of family farmers, small scale farmers, fishers, forest dwellers, herders, pastoralists, indigenous peoples by responding to their needs, recognizing their potentials, capacities, and innovations, and increasing the Agency of our own organizations, building our potentials and capacities to engage decision makers as well as respond to the social and economic needs of our members.
- c. Promote a rights-based approach to transforming agro food systems towards building climate resilience through policies that (a) secures our rights and access to natural resources- lands, waters, forests, and seeds, (b) promote agro-ecology and food sovereignty as a holistic systems approach that shorten value chains, increase resource efficiency, reduce food waste, promotes nutrient recycling, and builds on local knowledge (c) strengthen institutions of our organizations and cooperatives to increase our market power.
- d. Promote the implementation of the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication to address the challenges of climate change and to strengthen the sustainability and livelihood of small-scale and indigenous fishers, with equity and equality.
- e. Adopt and Implement Structural One Health, with programs that foster community autonomy, that reforms extension services to become more horizontal in farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing, that promote collective activities, that reform public policies to enable an agro-ecological transition and that provides public financing for vital community-owned infrastructure that is required for local food systems.
- f. Facilitate direct access to financing by farmers through our farmers' organizations and cooperatives to scale up and scale out appropriate and much needed innovations related to securing tenure rights to natural resources, agro-ecology, local and traditional crops, shorter value chains, participatory action researches, community-based and farmer-led innovation and extension services, and in maintaining peace in the communities.
- g. To ensure gender and youth-lens when enacting policies and implementing programs for agri-food system transformation, building climate resilience, ensuring equal rights and equitable opportunities for women and youth.

8. We, organizations of family farmers, fishers, forest dwellers, pastoralists, indigenous peoples and civil society, remain committed and steadfast to engage with FAO and its Member States in

building a just, healthy, nutritious, resilient food system that provides dignity and self-worth to our constituencies, and our members.

9. Thank you for your attention.