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## **REPORT**

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	32nd Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Europe (2 - 4 November 2020, virtual)

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### **I. Introduction**

The 32nd session of the Regional Conference for Europe (ERC32) of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) took place from 2 to 4 November 2020, in a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The **Coordination Working Party (FAO)** – hereinafter 'the Working Party' – addressed the preparations for ERC32 at its informal videoconference held on 21 October 2020. At that meeting, the Working Party discussed, in particular, the draft Declaration of Competence and Voting Rights presented by the Commission services (**WK 11145/2020**) and examined the draft positions of the EU and its Member States (EU/MS), on the basis of drafts prepared by a number of delegations, the Commission services and the Presidency.

Following further written consultation rounds and further discussions during informal virtual coordination meetings throughout ERC32, the Working Party finalised and approved through written procedure both the Declaration of Competence and Voting Rights and the EU/MS positions for ERC32. At its last informal coordination meeting held on 4 November 2020, the Working Party discussed the ERC32 draft report, before its adoption by the plenary.

The final versions of the EU/MS positions are set out in the addendum to the present document, together with the Declaration of Competence and Voting Rights of the European Union.

## II. Main outcomes<sup>1</sup>

As an introduction to the discussions on 'sustainable food systems and healthy diets in Europe and Central Asia', ERC32 heard a presentation by Ms Agnes Kalibata, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the UN Food Systems Summit, who explained, in particular, the preparatory process for the Summit. The EU/MS reiterated in this context their commitment to building a positive outcome from the Summit and to agreeing on bold follow-up actions.

In discussions on the 'priority areas of work' identified for the Europe and Central Asia region, ERC32 took on board most of the adjustments proposed by the EU/MS, including the importance of a 'sustainable food systems approach for healthy diets' that pays due attention to the three dimension of sustainability (environmental, economic and social), and the addition of an explicit reference to promoting the prudent use of antibiotics to fight antimicrobial resistance, including the phasing-out of their use as growth promoters.

ERC32 discussions on FAO's 'Hand-in-Hand Initiative' confirmed the overall support for this initiative as a contribution to the 2030 Agenda, in particular SDGs 1 and 2. In line with the EU/MS views, ERC32 requested FAO to further clarify the data protection aspects of this initiative and to ensure that members were duly involved in this process. Building on the EU/MS comments, ERC32 also recommended that FAO closely involve members in further shaping the governance and budgetary aspects of the initiative in the context of discussions on FAO's Programme of Work and Budget 2021-2023, and ensure coherence with existing initiatives and close cooperation with respective implementing partners.

The ERC32 report takes due account of the EU/MS views on FAO's decentralised offices network, in particular the need to use the full potential of the UN Development System repositioning, including by creating further synergies with the single action plan under the responsibility of the Resident Coordinator; the importance of further strengthening FAO's technical capacities at regional and sub-regional level (while maintaining adequate technical capacity at FAO headquarters); the need for regional offices to strengthen their relations with, in particular, the

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<sup>1</sup> The ERC32 report is available on the FAO website <http://www.fao.org/3/ne289en/ne289en.pdf>.

private sector and civil society; the need to adequately involve FAO's governing bodies in the decision-making on the opening or closing of decentralised offices.

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