



Brussels, 16 December 2024
(OR. en)

16901/24

DEVGEN 206
RELEX 1604
ALIM 19
COHAFA 87
ACP 134
COAFR 442
COEST 743
SUSTDEV 131
GLOBAL GATEWAY 42
FAO 50

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
On:	16 December 2024
To:	Delegations

No. prev. doc.:	15264/24
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Subject:	Stepping up Team Europe's support to global food security and nutrition - Council conclusions (16 December 2024)
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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on stepping up Team Europe's support to global food security and nutrition, as approved by the Council at its 4070th meeting held on 16 December 2024.

Council conclusions on stepping up Team Europe's support to global food security and nutrition

The Council recalls its conclusions on the Team Europe response of 2022 based on solidarity, sustainable production, resilience and food systems transformation, facilitated trade and effective multilateralism. In view of the worsening food insecurity worldwide, the Council affirms the need to remain committed to support global food security and nutrition and to reinforce and scale up progress on the four pillars of action.

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

1. The Council remains deeply concerned about the unprecedented levels of food insecurity impacting vulnerable populations globally. The Global Report on Food Crises and State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) identify the root causes of insecurity (poverty and inequalities) aggravated by conflicts as one of the primary drivers of food insecurity. The Council recognises that acute food insecurity, besides armed conflicts, is often caused by the interaction between economic shocks and underlying poverty, structural weaknesses and other aspects of vulnerability next to climate change, biodiversity loss and weather extremes.
2. Global food security has become increasingly geopolitical and food is being weaponized. The Council calls on the Commission, the High Representative, and Member States to advocate for compliance with International Humanitarian Law, accountability for violations, and for the systematic implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2417, which condemns the use of starvation as a method of warfare. The Council reminds that intentionally using starvation of civilians and the unlawful denial of humanitarian access and depriving civilians of essential resources as a method of warfare constitutes a war crime under the Rome Statute of the ICC.

3. The Council condemns Russia's unjustifiable, unprovoked and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, including Russia's weaponization of food, the deliberate destruction of Ukrainian agricultural infrastructure as well as grain ports, storage and export facilities, attacks on commercial vessels carrying Ukrainian grain and massive deployment of landmines and other explosive remnants of war. This negatively affects production and supply of food, and has dramatic consequences for vulnerable populations globally, in particular price volatility and severe disruptions to food production and supplies. The Council acknowledges that those hit the hardest are the least developed and most fragile countries, countries highly dependent on food supplies and imports, particularly those impacted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as countries most affected by climate change.
4. The Council commends Ukraine's commitment to global food security, including efforts to ensure that food commodities can reach the global market and the Grain from Ukraine programme. The Council recalls the food security and nutrition dimension of the Joint Communiqué adopted at the Summit on Peace in Ukraine in June 2024 and commend the further engagements on food security to keep its grain and agricultural products flowing to the global market. The Council stresses the importance of countering Russia's information manipulation and interference, including disinformation and destabilization efforts that hinder food security and nutrition efforts. The Council acknowledges also the urgent need for demining Ukraine's agricultural land and supporting the development of Ukraine's agriculture and-food systems to support affordable and accessible food for the world's most vulnerable countries.
5. As highlighted in the latest integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), specific regions face severe food crises with significant portions of their populations experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition and at risk of famine.
6. The escalation of conflict and hostilities in Gaza since 7 October 2023 has resulted in a humanitarian crisis of vast proportions, with catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity and malnutrition, as documented by the IPC report. The Council calls for an immediate ceasefire, the unconditional release of all hostages, as well as to calling for a full, rapid, safe and unhindered access to humanitarian aid at scale for Palestinians in need. In this regard, we stress the essential role of the UN and its agencies, notably UNRWA which provides crucial support to the civilian population, both in Gaza and the wider region.

7. The conflict in Sudan has led to one of the most severe hunger crises, with parts of the country experiencing famine (IPC Phase 5), as confirmed by the latest IPC report. Approximately 6 million people are in emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 4), with acute malnutrition levels critically high. The Council urges an immediate ceasefire and emphasises that life-saving food assistance and humanitarian operations must be carried out without delay, free from bureaucratic and administrative impediments, to prevent further escalation of the famine and the loss of countless lives.
8. The Council reiterates the critical need to strengthening the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus approach in prevention and response to food insecurity, which is essential for breaking the cycle of food and nutrition crises, particularly in fragile and conflict affected contexts. This approach should ensure efficient assistance mechanisms during times of need, but also contribute to building long-term food security, maintain and build sustainable food systems' resilience and functionality, enable local populations to secure livelihoods, strengthen peaceful and inclusive communities, and adapt agriculture and-food systems to climate change.
9. The Council is committed to ensure appropriate policy coherence and link between internal and external EU policies on food security and nutrition. In this context, the Council calls for strengthening engagement with partners, with a view to collaborate on a transition towards sustainable food systems in line with UN Food Systems Summit National Pathways, and to respond the concerns of to those partners impacted by EU legislation.

SOLIDARITY

10. Recalling Council Conclusions on addressing the humanitarian funding gap¹, the Council reiterates the need to remain actively engaged in intensifying efforts to address the humanitarian funding gap. In contexts marked by food insecurity and malnutrition, such efforts will contribute to ensure life-saving food assistance in line with humanitarian principles and to facilitate the transition towards sustainable, resilient, inclusive food systems, in line with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The Council reaffirms the collective commitment of the EU to provide at least 0.7% of collective GNI as ODA by 2030, and encourages its Member States to continue their efforts to close the humanitarian funding gap.

¹ 9598/23

11. Humanitarian access to people in need remains crucial to increase global food security and eliminate hunger. The Council reaffirms that all parties in armed conflicts have an obligation under international humanitarian law to allow and facilitate safe, rapid, unconditional and unimpeded passage of humanitarian aid and emergency food assistance for civilians in need, including in situations of acute food insecurity. Ensuring the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure is at the heart of preventing and reducing hunger.
12. The Council recognises the extraordinary efforts of humanitarian workers and welcomes the emergency support provided by the UN agencies, international and local NGOs, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and other partners in response to conflicts, political violence, natural disasters and climate shocks, and calls on them to continue to provide support and seek synergies in delivering impact on the ground.
13. The Council emphasises the need to rapidly increase the efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance, including through innovative approaches such as anticipatory action. This should be implemented by improving targeting practices, assessment of root causes, response capacities and targeted solutions including cash transfers as the preferred modality for food assistance due to their cost-efficiency, amongst other. Where appropriate, cash assistance should also be linked to relevant social protection system supported by development actors. Where possible, development actors should complement humanitarian action with long-term development initiatives, including capacity building measures to strengthen resilience. Disaster preparedness, anticipatory actions and early warnings, as well as building resilience are crucial for protecting communities' food security and nutrition and saving lives and livelihoods.
14. The Council recalls that social protection programmes, especially social safety nets providing multi-purpose cash assistance, school meals programmes and nutrition-sensitive social protection are vital tools to increase the resilience of affected populations and to mitigate the adverse impact of shocks, including periods of food insecurity and malnutrition. The Council stresses the need to link, where possible and appropriate, humanitarian cash response to existing social protection systems for a longer-term impact and to expand support to such schemes, including promotion of shock-responsive social protection programmes while at the same time ensuring national ownership and clear exit and handover strategies.

15. The Council recognises the need to adapt existing financing mechanisms, such as grants, guarantees, concessional loans, co-financing and blended finance and insurance, and encourages the mobilization of domestic resources and private capital in order to better support food security and nutrition initiatives in low-income countries, fragile contexts and protracted humanitarian crises, as well as to ensure better access to finance at the local level and for persons in vulnerable and marginalised situations.
16. The Council recognises that food insecurity and malnutrition disproportionately impact women and girls, perpetuating a cycle of malnutrition, worsening adverse health outcomes and increasing the risks of conflict-related sexual violence. The Council reaffirms its commitment to the promotion of women's and girls' rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a priority across all areas of action. The Council urges the Commission to address the gender dimensions of food insecurity through transformative approaches that tackle the root causes of gender inequality with specific attention to addressing intersectional discrimination. The Council welcomes the adoption of the voluntary guidelines of the Committee on World Food Security on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment while remaining committed to the new European Consensus on Development. The Council also calls for improvement of the analysis and understanding of, and responses to, the gender-differentiated impacts of food insecurity for which providing sex- age and disability disaggregated data is key.
17. The EU and its Member States will continue to contribute to international initiatives aimed at assisting global partners in macro-economic stability and, when necessary, in debt, management and restructuring, as well as efforts to curb domestic food price inflation. This includes the implementation of the G20/Paris Club Common Framework for Debt Treatment, beyond the Debt Service Suspension Initiative. The EU will collaborate with international financial institutions, such as the IMF and the World Bank Group. The Council welcomes in particular the World Bank Group Global Challenge Programme on Food and Nutrition Security and calls for an ambitious International Development Association 21 replenishment that will also benefit food security and nutrition.

PRODUCTION

18. The Council stresses the need for sustainable agriculture and food systems transformation including accessible and resilient seed systems taking into account economic, social and ecological sustainability, to achieve food security. This transformation should further address structural problems such as dwindling natural resources, increased pressure on land, ocean and inland water, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, increased soil degradation, food loss and waste and growing fragility and inequalities. The impacts of climate change, particularly prolonged droughts and destructive rainfall and floods, exacerbate these issues and affects communities' resilience, forcing displacement and increasing conflict and social unrest. The Council also recognises the role of agriculture and food systems in the context of climate change and accordingly calls for the promotion of climate-resilient agricultural practices, including through climate finance.
19. Smallholder, family and subsistence farmers, fisheries and aquaculture producers, as well as agri-MSMEs are critical to local, regional and global food security and nutrition. The Council recognises the urgency to a just transition to sustainable, inclusive and resilient global agriculture and food systems and recalls the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the 2021 UN Food System Summit National Pathways. The Council commits to developing and supporting multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder strategies and actions for creating or strengthening sustainable, resilient, local agricultural value chains that support countries to reduce the impact of global economic fluctuations on their imports of critical inputs, supported by organic farming and food processing as well as agroecological practices and other innovative approaches.
20. Recalling the fruitful discussions on agriculture and sustainable development at the sixth EU-AU Summit of February 2022, and the recent consultations on the Post-Malabo Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme Framework (CAADP) to be finalised in early 2025 in Kampala, the Council recognises the need for a particular focus on African food security and nutrition. The Council supports the African Union to take forward the 'Kampala' framework.

21. The Council calls for further Global Gateway investments within a Team Europe approach, targeting key value chains (including transportation and storage in partner countries) and strategic corridors, contributing to food security, nutrition and the transition of vulnerable countries towards sustainable, resilient and nutritious food systems. These investments serve the goal to reach SDG 2 and other goals of the 2030 Agenda, while leaving no one behind. They should follow a 360-degree approach that addresses poverty and gender inequality and promote public and civil society engagement as well as the private sector and considers the key principles of sustainability, scalability, inclusiveness, and partnerships. Furthermore, the Council supports a holistic approach to agriculture and food systems, with the aim to increase local production for food security and nutrition and resilience to shocks.

TRADE

22. The Council stresses that a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system can substantially stimulate development worldwide and contribute to food security and nutrition. In the perspective of a functioning global trade in agricultural products, the Council recalls the importance of equal partnerships that take into account both the EU's and partner countries interests and priorities.
23. The Council emphasises the importance of maintaining open trade routes and deplores any disruptions that negatively impact global food security and nutrition. The Council underscores the EU's commitment to supporting global trade in food and agricultural products through various trade support measures where necessary.
24. The EU should continue to invest in regional connectivity to support local and global food security and nutrition through the export and import of agricultural products and essential inputs. The Council underscores that the EU will continue to invest in the Solidarity Lanes, given the persistent threats from Russia to the security and stability in the Black Sea, including freedom of navigation and to enhance the connectivity between Ukraine, the EU, and global markets. The Council also deplores the unilateral termination of the "Black Sea Grain Initiative" by Russia on 17 July 2023. The EU should also continue to support regional economic integration processes in other parts of the world including the roll out of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement for which the strategic transport corridors are of importance.

25. The Council reaffirms its stance against unjustified export restrictions and commits to enhancing global market transparency and coordination through the Agricultural Market Information System (AMIS). The Council stresses its commitment to preserve the global flow of agricultural and food products. The Council recalls that the EU has played a vital role in sustaining Ukraine's economy and agriculture sector, notably through the establishment of the Solidarity Lanes and the suspension of import duties and quotas on Ukrainian and Moldovan exports to the European Union (Autonomous Trade Measures). These trade support measures have allowed Ukraine to continue to export its agricultural products. The Council also acknowledges that Ukraine's ability to secure the Ukrainian Black Sea maritime grain corridor facilitated the return of the exports to third countries and countries suffering from hunger.

MULTILATERALISM

26. The Council highlights that significant efforts must be made to get back towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals. In the face of these challenges, the EU will remain a responsive, responsible and reliable global actor. The EU supports the collective effort of the international community to achieve zero hunger by 2030; new long-term solutions and investments in resilient food systems are needed. It further welcomes the food security provisions of the Pact for the Future. Ending hunger and eliminating food and nutrition insecurity as well as enhancing ambitions to address the climate crisis are key actions in the pact. In this sense, the Council highlights the need to mobilize sustainable finance from all sources, including from non-traditional donors and the private sector, which will be addressed in the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Seville, Spain, between 30 June -3 July 2025.

27. The Council reiterates its commitment to effective multilateralism and stresses the urgency of accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its sustainable development goals, in particular SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, while calling on the Commission, the High Representative and Member States to strengthen their engagement with key multilateral partners and partner countries in the multilateral context: relevant UN organisations, in particular Rome-based agencies and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), with OACPS, the G7, the G20 and the WTO, as well as international financial institutions both at headquarters and country level. The Council calls for streamlined and better-coordinated global food security and nutrition initiatives to enhance effective multilateralism to address food insecurity and malnutrition. It encourages intra-agency collaboration among FAO, WFP, IFAD, and other UN agencies, as well as CFS to enhance food security and nutrition and sustainable food systems and recognises the role of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement.
28. The Council emphasises the importance of the Nutrition for Growth Summit (N4G) that will be held in March 2025 in Paris placing nutrition at the centre of the sustainable development agenda and the EU's political and financial leadership in nutrition efforts. The Council supports timely implementation of key initiatives such as the follow-up to the UN Food Systems Summit and its stocktaking moments, the Global Alliance on Food Security, the G7 “Apulia Food Systems Initiative (AFSI), and COP28 Declaration on ‘Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action’ and the ongoing Sharm El Sheikh Joint Work Programme on implementation of climate action in agriculture and food security and nutrition, as well as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention to combat Desertification, and the Framework Convention on Climate Change.
29. The Council welcomes the launch of the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty (GAHP) in the G20 and welcomes its potential to complement existing global structures to advance food security and nutrition, including the Global Network Against Food Crises along with its publication of the Global Report on Food Crises, advocating for its development into a comprehensive network addressing food insecurity.

NEXT STEPS

30. The Council reaffirms the importance of the four-pillar framework (solidarity, production, trade, and multilateralism). The Council calls on the Commission services, the EEAS and Member States for continued regular updates and reporting on the resources mobilised under the Team Europe response to global food insecurity including concrete flagship initiatives, emphasising the need for reliable, timely and accurate disaggregated data.
31. The Council is committed to maintain its efforts in favour of food security and nutrition in the framework of the 2030 Agenda and will enhance work to address the interconnected root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition through comprehensive strategies to promote human development, economic stability, climate resilience and conflict prevention, aligning activities within the Humanitarian- Development-Peace Nexus.
32. To foster operational coordination and cooperation on the ground to achieve maximum impact for long-term resilient food security, the Council calls on Team Europe members, to align their respective interventions and investments towards collective outcomes. The Council also calls on Team Europe members to engage in anticipatory action, disaster risk reduction strategies, as much as possible through predictable, multiyear, flexible funding that enables a quick scaling up of response to urgent needs and ensures operational continuity in neglected crises.
33. The Council underlines the urgent need to actively contribute to the transformation of agriculture and food systems by promoting sustainable consumption, production and trade practices, reducing food loss and waste, including, where applicable, the meaningful involvement of organic agriculture and agroecological practices, as well as boosting nature-positive, water-smart and diversified domestic agricultural production in partner countries.
34. The Council calls for strengthened support to local food systems, family and smallholder farmers, and agri-MSMEs, which are key players to strengthen communities' food security and nutrition on the long-term including through efforts to address socio-economic inequalities. This support should advance equitable livelihoods, promoting access to universal social protection systems and facilitating finance and market access. Particular attention should be given to addressing structural challenges faced by women and youth.

35. The Council underlines the importance of the Global Gateway strategy in enhancing resilient and sustainable agri-food and aquatic value chains. This includes investment initiatives within the five key areas of partnership of the Global Gateway Strategy, with special regard to investments in transport and storage infrastructures, education and research, and climate-friendly, energy-efficient value chains. The Council recognises the need for further discussion and Team Europe coordination on the interplay between the Global Gateway Strategy and global food security and nutrition.
36. The Council underlines the pivotal role of science and innovation in transforming food systems and achieving a world free of hunger and all forms of malnutrition. Recognising the important role of international research and scientific institutions, such as CGIAR, the Council calls for a wider dissemination and uptake of knowledge products and innovation.
37. Noting the importance of the EU's 2015-2025 Action Plan on Nutrition, and alignment with the World Health Assembly global nutrition targets and the SDGs, the Council calls on the Commission to continue to coordinate nutrition approaches with Member States, in particular in the context of the Nutrition for Growth Summit (N4G), and to consider a revised Action Plan as part of an N4G commitment.
38. The Council reaffirms its unwavering support to Ukraine for as long as it takes. The Council calls for further support Ukraine's food exports, its economic recovery and demining operations and maintaining Ukraine humanitarian situation high on the agenda.
39. In this context, the Council calls for strengthening the Team Europe response to food insecurity and malnutrition with particular attention paid to respect for human rights. The Council recalls the CFS Voluntary Guidelines on the Right to Adequate Food taking into account humanitarian, development, macroeconomic, market, trade, policy, gender analysis, and political tools for maximum impact. The Council underlines the importance of the collaboration with international partners and civil society organisations. Innovative tools should be explored with development financing institutions and bilateral agencies.

40. The Council underlines the need to counter foreign information manipulation and interference and destabilisation efforts, which undermine the efforts to address food security and nutrition.
41. The Council will remain politically engaged, as it was for COP 29, on forthcoming high level engagements, including the Nutrition for Growth Summit, the next European Humanitarian Forum and the EU-Africa Summit.
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