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COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

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International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD): Outcome and Follow-up

1. At its Nineteenth Session held in April 2005, the Committee on Agriculture (COAG) endorsed a proposal from Brazil for FAO to convene an International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD). The proposal was approved by Council at its Hundred and Twenty-eighth Session in June 2005. ICARRD was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 7-10 March 2006, and its outcome was presented to the Thirty-second Session of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in November 2006. At its Hundred and Thirty-first Session, Council endorsed the conclusion of CFS that COAG, at its Twentieth Session, should consider the ICARRD recommendations and submit to the CFS, if appropriate, relevant recommendations for consideration at its Thirty-third Session in 2007.
2. In endorsing the proposal for ICARRD, both the CFS and the Council reaffirmed FAO's central role in supporting access to land by the rural poor in order to reduce poverty and hunger and promote sustainable rural development, which was first identified at FAO's Conference in 1945, and subsequently at the 1966 World Land Reform Conference, the 1979 World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD), the 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) and the World Food Summit: *five years later*. It was also recognized that access to land alone is not sufficient but needs to be complemented by access to other livelihoods, assets and services, and an enabling policy environment that promotes equity and the empowerment and democratic participation of the poor in decisions that affect their welfare. ICARRD strongly endorsed the view that agrarian reform and rural development remain crucial for meeting the WFS and MDG targets relating to the reduction of poverty and hunger and the promotion of sustainable development.
3. ICARRD provided a timely opportunity to call attention to the rural face of hunger and poverty. Despite progress made over the decades, the need to improve access to land and other livelihood assets remains a pressing issue in many parts of the world. Continuing rural poverty and landlessness has led to growing demands for FAO technical support to develop appropriate land tenure and administration systems and to strengthen rural institutions that promote the

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livelihoods and empowerment of the rural poor. FAO is recognized globally for its work in land tenure and strengthening rural institutions through its linked normative and field programmes, and as a “warehouse” of knowledge and expertise. A test of the importance of ICARRD for FAO and its member countries will be the extent to which it promotes an appropriate balance among the competing priorities of FAO, ensuring the adequate structure and allocation of resources for the pressing issue of improving secure and equitable access to land and the strengthening of rural institutions for the rural poor.

4. ICARRD was opened by the then Acting President of Brazil, His Excellency José Alencar Gomes da Silva and the FAO Director-General, and was attended by approximately 1 400 participants. Ninety-two Member Nations were represented, with 25 ministers, eight UN agencies, six intergovernmental organizations, and over 150 civil society organizations. Thirty-nine heads of delegations and the Holy See presented statements on progress in agrarian reform and rural development. Forty national reports were submitted along with 30 case studies prepared by national stakeholders. An open debate between civil society and government representatives recognized the importance of dialogue and effective public policies for more equitable access to land and rural development as a condition for food security and human dignity. Twenty-seven Thematic Sessions enabled discussion on themes related to ICARRD. A parallel Civil Society Forum attracted over 300 participants from 210 organizations and 66 countries. The ICARRD Declaration was unanimously adopted by acclamation by the Conference at its closing session. It recommended:

- the development of appropriate mechanisms through a lasting platform at global, regional, national and local levels to institutionalize social dialogue, cooperation and monitoring and evaluation of progress in agrarian reform and rural development;
- the adoption by CFS, in close collaboration with COAG, of appropriate measures to implement the ICARRD Declaration;
- International Partnership Initiatives on agrarian reform and rural development;
- that CFS hold a multi-stakeholder dialogue on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the WFS;
- that Council examine the possibility of further follow-up mechanisms.

5. The CFS and Council sessions following ICARRD recognized the importance of agrarian reform and rural development for eradicating hunger and poverty, and further recognized that FAO has a significant role to play in building institutional capacity, providing policy advice and technical assistance on agrarian reform and rural development, and empowering rural poor and women through access to land and other natural resources and rural services. Notwithstanding this consensus, members of CFS and Council expressed diverse views regarding how best to address the recommendations of the ICARRD Declaration.

6. The ICARRD recommendations, together with those of the CFS and of the Council, reflect, in large part, the ongoing activities under the regular programme of FAO, supported by specific initiatives through extrabudgetary resources to help ensure that secure and equitable access to land and other livelihoods assets, with particular emphasis on gender and social equity, are brought more fully into FAO’s agenda through enhanced collaboration with civil society organizations and other UN agencies, particularly IFAD. Substantial progress continues to be made both in implementing ongoing activities under the regular programme and in specific initiatives, and additional impetus has been provided by the enthusiastic recognition of the importance of these issues through ICARRD by many member countries in all regions. FAO’s regular and field programme activities on land tenure, land administration, access to rural land and other natural resources continue to provide a platform at global, regional, national and local levels for policy and technical assistance, social dialogue with concerned stakeholders, and cooperation, monitoring and evaluation of progress in these areas both through its own technical and project activities and through its active partnerships with many organizations including IFAD, UN Habitat, the World Bank and regional development banks, Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, the African Union, Millennium Challenge Corporation and others.

Several International Partnership Initiatives developed during ICARRD are now underway, including the TCP-funded Lusophone regional capacity building programme on land tenure, land use management and related legal aspects. FAO's programme and activities also contribute to strengthening the capacity of rural public sector institutions to deliver services to the rural poor to enhance their productivity and incomes, as well as the self-help capacity of autonomous, representative producers' and workers' organizations, cooperatives and community-based organizations to support their members' livelihood activities and to give them a voice in policy dialogue. The Thirty-second Session of the CFS included as part of its Special Forum programme a successful multi-stakeholder dialogue entitled "Agrarian Reform and Rural Development". Finally, as further immediate follow-up to ICARRD, FAO is responding to requests from Member Nations for regional TCP projects for Africa, Asia and Latin America to support policy dialogue between government, civil society and the private sector, and to promote the sharing of lessons within and between countries.

7. FAO remains committed to assisting Member Nations to improve access to land and institutional capacity for pro-poor rural development in a manner that is gender-inclusive, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable.