

**Consultative Conference of Civil Society Organizations Preparatory for the FAO Regional Conference  
for the Near East for the 34th Session - NERC 34  
"No hunger on earth as of today"**

We, the civil society organizations of the Near East and the North Africa region, gathering in Beirut from 19 to 21 February 2018 at the invitation of FAO and hosted by the GAIA Association to develop the contribution of civil society to the 34<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference to be held in Beirut during April, April 2018.

The Near East and the North Africa have for years been plagued by protracted crises resulting from occupation and wars that destroyed food production structures, forced millions into forced migration, led to the emergence of human trafficking, hunger and the inability of many to access medicines, safe and healthy food. Therefore,

1. We strongly condemn all practices, whatever their origin, that lead to discrimination against citizens on the basis of religion, race, language or affiliation;
2. We affirm that the right of return of the displaced and the crimes causing the displacement does not fall short of time, and call on all parties to ensure their safe return to their areas of origin and the restitution of their land;
3. We affirm that land, water and food are fundamental human rights, embodied in international treaties and human rights instruments that all governments must respect, protect and fulfill;
4. We call for ensuring the human rights of women and young people in a decent life, especially since the situation of women in our region is one of the worst in the world. We still need to ensure representation at all levels of decision-making locally, nationally and regionally;
5. We call for the respect, protection and fulfilment of the rights of children and the prevention of all forms of their exploitation in work and circumstances depriving them of normal childhood;
6. We call on all working institutions to take care of the marginalized and those with special disabilities and ensure their integration into society and their right to a decent life;
7. Express our absolute solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle against Zionism and the Israeli occupation;
8. We call upon countries and organizations of the region to impose economic, food, agricultural and academic boycott on the Israeli occupying state to compel it to respect international law and abide by its resolutions with respect to Palestine and call for the peaceful resolution of armed conflicts and wars in the Near East and North Africa;
9. We also affirm our opposition to all forms of occupation and our solidarity with the rights of the Saharan people to freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources. In no case shall a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence;
10. We call for the immediate cessation of practices that use hunger as a weapon and the destruction of civilian infrastructure in the region;
11. We declare our solidarity with the struggles of all the peoples of the world for a better future, free from hunger and malnutrition.

We emphasize that civil society organizations are an indispensable source of expertise and initiatives required to reform and evaluate adopted policies, in addition to strengthening food sovereignty in the

region. Their role should be acknowledged as a major contributor to food policies and the formulation of strategies for the agricultural sector at the state level. Therefore, we call on FAO to recognize NGOs as full agricultural-development partners concerned with the implementation of programs on the ground.

We support FAO's systematic efforts to implement the policy products issued by the CFS within the specificities of our region, and in each country. We also note the need to include pollution caused by war and industrial activities that have contaminated our agricultural areas, as well as the danger of mines and UXOs in farmland. We urge the necessary systematic preventive and corrective measures that are the responsibility of states and United Nations organizations.

We reaffirm our interest to cooperate with FAO on these issues to combat hunger, malnutrition and poverty within a comprehensive approach, considering that the state of the region are duty bound under international law to hold accountable those responsible for the crises and shocks that test our resilience.