The urgent need to act in the face of interconnected crises (security, pastoral and rural, economic - soaring prices...) weakening the livelihoods and food resilience of vulnerable populations and threatening the future of thousands of agropastoral communities.

1. Opened by Her Excellency Mrs. Victoire TOMEAH-DOGBE, Prime Minister of the Togolese Republic, the meeting brought together 265 virtual and face-to-face participants. It examined the forecasted results of the 2022-2023 agropastoral campaign as well as the food and nutrition situation. It took stock of the national response plans for the 2022 food crisis. Initiatives relating to the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP), the resilience of the most vulnerable populations and regional governance of food and nutritional security (FNS) were discussed. Finally, participants debated the links between the pastoral crisis, security crisis and food and nutrition resilience.

2. The 2022-2023 agropastoral season was generally satisfactory. Cereal production is estimated at 76.4 million tonnes, an increase of 7% over last year and 6% over the average for the last five years. The net cereal balance is positive overall, with an availability of 198 kg/person/year compared to a five-year average of 184 kg/person/year. The production of roots and tubers, estimated at 208.5 million tonnes, is up by 2% and 9% respectively compared to last year and the five-year average. Cash crops (cowpeas, groundnuts, soya beans, sesame) also performed well, with the exception of cotton, whose production volume of 3.25 million tonnes was down by 12.5% compared to the five-year average. Fodder production is good overall, but insecurity and violence is limiting access to it. In addition, the increase in bush fires is also destroying part of the fodder.

3. However, the Members of the Network draw the attention of policy makers to the persistence of factors that are threatening the access of the most vulnerable to adequate food and nutrition:
   - Insecurity continues to generate large flows of internally displaced persons (IDPs), currently standing at more than 6.1 million people, including 3.1 million in Nigeria and nearly 2 million in Burkina Faso. In addition to the immediate food and humanitarian consequences, this violence deprives people of their productive assets: land, livestock, pasture, water resources, etc. The resilience of thousands of agro-pastoral communities is threatened;
   - Access to food for the most vulnerable continues to deteriorate. Food prices have increased by 36% compared to the five-year average. Inflation is 18% on average, in an unfavourable context combining the depreciation of local currencies, export restrictions on food products imposed by certain countries and the consequences of the war in Ukraine;
   - More generally, the region is facing complex, interconnected crises (food, security, health, socio-economic, etc.) requiring innovative intervention instruments and, above all, strong long-term political and financial commitments.
Nearly 28.9 million people are currently in need of emergency food assistance, including 17 million in Nigeria, where the analysis of food insecure people now covers 27 of the 36 states. If effective responses are not implemented, 41.9 million people could be food insecure during the lean season in June-August 2023, including 25.3 million in Nigeria. Of these, 25,500 people are projected to be in a disastrous situation: 20,000 in Burkina Faso, 4,000 in Nigeria and 1,500 in Mali. Acute malnutrition among children exceeds the emergency threshold (15%) in Senegal, Mauritania, Niger and north-eastern Nigeria.

Members therefore recommend that States accelerate the formulation and implementation of response plans, including specific mitigation measures for the estimated 76.2 million people currently under pressure. They encourage them to facilitate access to humanitarian organisations for emergency interventions in areas heavily affected by the food crisis but difficult to access; to lift restrictions on the export of food products; to continue and strengthen actions for the prevention and management of malnutrition, and to implement policies that support the purchasing power and food and nutrition resilience of vulnerable people. They also encourage States and their intergovernmental organisations (ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS) to invest more in finding sustainable solutions to the problem of fertilisers, most of whose regional production is exported outside the continent.

Members draw the attention of the public authorities to the urgent need to act in the face of the interconnected crises (security, pastoral and rural, economic - soaring prices, etc.) that are undermining the livelihoods and food resilience of vulnerable populations and threatening the future of thousands of agropastoral communities. Security tensions are a threat to young agro-pastoralists who have lost their bearings and are looking for opportunities. This situation highlights the need for:

- Rebuilding the governance of agropastoral territories, around local actors, including professional agropastoral organisations and local governments; the need for co-construction and co-implementation of public policies;
- Implementing policies to optimise the agropastoral, food and informal economy, which provides employment opportunities for young people in general;
- Strengthening local mechanisms for dialogue, peace-building and governance to foster a new social contract for inclusive development in agro-pastoral territories;
- Partners to define innovative and flexible financing instruments; direct intervention tools to local initiatives adapted to crisis contexts.

Following up on the high-level meeting of 6 April 2022 on the food and nutrition crises, the participants welcomed the commitment of the international community, which, out of an initial pledge of 2.5 billion euros, made it possible to mobilise 4.58 billion euros, including 1.9 billion euros for emergency needs in 2022 and 2.67 billion for development interventions. They recall, however, that the structuring interventions will have an effect in several years and urge the partners to strengthen and concretise their commitments in view of the immensity of the challenges. The Network members also welcomed the progress made by the frontline security countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Nigeria) in the operationalisation of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDP). They encourage them to accelerate the pace and share the lessons learned from their experience with a view to extending the approach to the rest of the countries in the Sahel and West Africa region in 2024.

In the area of food crisis prevention, members of the Network encourage governments to:

- Implement policies to strengthen the sustainability and resilience of food systems, notably with regards to natural resource degradation and the purchasing power of the most vulnerable;
- Invest in the implementation of the roadmaps defined by the Network for the strengthening of food and nutrition security information systems and their capacity to control the determinants of local food production stability and food accessibility - in accordance with the commitments of the Food Crisis Prevention and Management (PREGEC Charter). They also welcomed the investment of the Cabo Verde government in structural programmes for social protection and sustainable food systems in favour of the resilience of the most vulnerable. Finally, the members invite ECOWAS, UEMOA, CILSS, CORAF and their partners to federate their efforts to optimise the contribution of agricultural research and innovation to the sustainability of food systems, food and nutritional security and policy-making.

Discussing experiences and good practices in preventing food crises and strengthening FNS governance, participants welcomed the efforts of the Togolese government to boost food systems and build resilience through bold incentive policies for agro-pastoral value chains, including financing and agricultural land. Despite the difficult economic context, they encourage the States of the region to maintain and strengthen their political and financial commitments to the sustainability of food systems and the resilience of the most vulnerable people.

The participants agreed on the following provisional dates for the next meetings of the Network: (i) Restricted Meeting (12-14 April 2023); (ii) 39th Annual Meeting (5-8 December 2023).

Lomé, 9 December 2022

Participants to the 38th Annual Meeting of the RPCA