GLOBAL RESILIENCE PARTNERSHIP

BELLAGIO STATEMENT
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# Urgent Transformation towards Resilient Food Systems in Vulnerable and Fragile Regions

*In March 2019, the Global Resilience Partnership (GRP) convened a group of global experts, experienced practitioners and influential stakeholders at the Bellagio Rockefeller Centre in Italy. The group was tasked with identifying strategies and concrete actions of how to build resilient food systems in vulnerable and fragile regions[1]. The objective of the meeting was to identify priority areas that can impact global action to influence local realities in a context of urgency.*

*The meeting participants have agreed the following outputs to guide future work and investments, including input into global political and knowledge processes, such as the UN Secretary General's Climate Summit and the work of the Global Commission on Adaptation.*

[1] *We define vulnerable and fragile regions as those where the degree of exposure to environmental and socio-economical factors is high, people are directly dependent on local natural resources and ecosystems for their subsistence, and the social capacity to adapt and transform in the face of change is eroded (Adger, 2006).*

# Call to Action

Global food insecurity has been rising since 2014. This recent reversal of longer-term trends is accentuated in the most vulnerable regions of the world and is attributed to increasing extreme weather events and geopolitical instability. Simultaneously, stabilizing greenhouse gas emissions related to food systems is now one of the most important challenges and at the same time a promising solution for meeting global climate mitigation targets.

If we fail on transforming our food systems towards resilience and sustainability, we fail on the Sustainable Development Goals and we fail on the Paris agreement. In order to succeed, food systems need to urgently be placed at the centre of global political processes, such as the UN Secretary General's Climate Summit and the achievements of the SDGs.

To accelerate climate action for food security and nutrition in vulnerable and fragile contexts, we need a fundamental shift from the current focus on efficiency and productivity towards resilience-based approaches that promote risk management and diversity in all its forms, seek non-linear transformational change, support local actors to transform their own futures in the face of change, and tackle distant drivers along a food system approach from production to consumption.

## ACTION AREAS CRITICAL FOR TRANSFORMATION

The participants of this Bellagio Dialogue identified three Action Areas that are critical to this transformation:

- Halting the global drivers of agricultural land degradation and expansion
- Transforming towards more diverse, nutritious and resilient food landscapes
- Building resilient food systems as a key component of regional stability thereby reducing the risks of conflict and sustaining peace.

These actions cut across science, policy and practice. The list is also not meant to be exhaustive but represents the considered opinions of the participants of this dialogue for immediate action.

## 1 Halting the global drivers of agricultural land degradation and expansion

**There is an urgent need to incentivize and invest in resilience and sustainable farm intensification practices together with land degradation neutrality and zero agriculture land expansion.**

The action area warrants a "change in the rules of the game"; to embed resilience into food and agriculture value chains, realignment of public and private support to agriculture towards positive climate outcomes, policy options to advance sustainable intensification and land restoration linked to avoided expansion into virgin lands, combined with International Financial Institutions (IFIs) mainstreaming resilience into their food and agriculture programme investments.

This transformative objective includes a focus on the quadruple role of soil for sustaining and improving food production (increased soil organic matter enhancing ecosystem services for productivity); increasing large scale carbon sequestration (soil as a carbon sink for climate mitigation); maintaining ecosystem services (increased water retention, reduced soil erosion, increased soil fertility and health through wide range of soil organisms); and adapting and building resilience against multiple shocks and stressors.

## 2 Transforming towards more diverse, nutritious and resilient food landscapes

**Diversity - in all its forms[1] and at all scales- is a key entry point to building resilience and sustainabltiy in contexts where the uncertainties related to climate change and other stressors start outpacing the capacity for predictive adaptation responses.**

Diversity can improve resilience, increase ecosystem services that provide support to agriculture, enhance yields and reduce the needs for inputs and build soil health. Generic and species diversity of crops can both provide resilience to different disturbances including, for example, droughts and pest outbreaks and improve access to more nutritious diets and thus improved public health.

These action areas call for the commitment of national governments, IFIs, multilateral funds - including the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF) - and donors to support sustainable and resilient small-scale food and agriculture initiatives. Support such as increasing research that enhances the business case for diverse, nutritious systems that underpin resilience across entire value chains and landscapes; setting up a resilience investment platform to match impact investors with investable resilient food and agriculture projects working with smallholder farmers, herders, fishers, foresters and agribusiness; building the capacity of smallholders and agribusinesses to be able to access grants and loans (from savings and loan organisations, and commercial banks) for investments into building resilient and sustainable farms and enterprises; improved access by smallholders to daily/weekly climatic services and seasonal forecasts; and demonstrating the power of restoration and nature-based solutions for transforming entire landscapes.

1 *Including biological, economic, and social diversity*

## 3 Building resilient food systems as a key component of regional stability

**Resilient food systems are a key component of regional stability. We need to rapidly improve our understanding of the efficacy of emergency responses and longer-term resilience interventions in relation to food security, instability and potential conflict.**

The complex relationship between extreme weather events, conflicts and food insecurity is not new. There is a growing political understanding of the importance of these relationships. However, successful resilience-building interventions and initiatives in this complex space are still relatively young and have been poorly documented and understood.

This action area calls for systematic collation and analyses of existing resilience-building interventions and initiatives that are working in fragile regions. Specifically, those supporting Regional Intergovernmental Organizations to increase resilience capacities and refine regional risk assessment processes to better identify and implement the best emergency and resilience response options at local, sub-national, national and regional levels. Additional actions include addressing land tenure, natural resource and property rights at multiple scales, application of big data techniques and geospatial tools to inform agricultural extension, promote learning, support real time and spatially explicit decisions to prevent crisis and optimize access to markets. Furthermore, increasing access to innovative financial services, closing the insurance gap, and enabling agency of actors through behaviour changes and changes in social norms is required for long-term resilience and sustainability.

For each of these action areas, we recognize the need to improve learning from existing successful experiences and innovations in location specific agro-sylvo-pastoral systems including agro-ecology, agro-forestry, conservation agriculture and nature-based solutions. We must encourage the adoption of innovative practices at plot, farm, ecosystem and national levels to store more carbon while also increasing soil fertility and resilient agriculture livelihoods. We must also significantly reduce negative practices (i.e. harmful pesticides), in particular those that destroy the soil and its organisms playing a vital role in carbon sequestration and soil fertility.

# Taking this work forward

**Innovation is a prerequisite to transformative action. Innovation for our purposes is defined as adding practical, sustainable, resilient value at scale. Innovation is an adaptive and iterative process that should dare to take risks and be ready to learn from failure.**

Equally important is taking the first step – starting the innovation journey even if you might not be on the perfect pathway.

## We have identified thefollowing fundamentals of innovation:

- Scale and urgency are critical - we must go beyond pilots and seek transformational impact that helps communities, countries and regions find pathways to resilient and sustainable food and water systems that deal with complex trade-offs and interdependencies.
- Ownership at the whole level – interventions must be owned by government, communities and the private sector. If you exclude one you risk undermining the innovation.
- Gender and equity considerations are fundamental. Multiple opportunities are lost and resources wasted when they are an afterthought.

**The road to the UN Secretary General's Climate Summit provides a unique opportunity to develop these ideas into concrete actions and commitments that can be profiled at the summit itself under the resilience and nature based solutions themes.**

In order to foster shared responsibility for concrete action, messaging will be shaped to simultaneously mobilize communities in the most vulnerable regions as well as influential global investors. The Global Commission on Adaptation (GCA) will produce its flagship report on Climate Adaptation at the UNSG's Climate Summit and launch a number of Actions Tracks to amplify action on climate adaptation. The GRP is working closely with the GCA and will ensure that this statement is made available to the GCA to integrate into its report and shape the development of the Action Tracks.

Other political meetings targeted for the sharing of this Declaration include: World Bank Spring Meetings, UNFCCC Regional Climate Weeks, G7, G20 and the biannual UN Security Council meetings in which updates on the global food security crisis and associated links with conflict are delivered.

A number of other influential publications are due in the near future including, the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Special Report on Climate and Land Use, and other publications by groups such FOLU (Food & Land-Use Coalition) and CCAFS (Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security). These provide vehicles for profiling some of the outputs of this meeting.

Global Resilience Partnership, which represents over 35 influential public and private organizations working together on resilience, is seeking to define its priorities for the next five years. The outputs of these deliberations will shape how these organizations work and invest together. Finally, the participants have agreed to maintain and grow this collaboration to produce the specific science and knowledge outputs to support the transition towards resilience for food & water security in vulnerable and fragile contexts.

# *Workshop Participants*

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