

Notes on the meeting of Convenors and Friends

1 February 2018

1. The first meeting of Convenors and Friends with the President in 2018 was held on Thursday, 1 February, in room C600, starting at 3 p.m.

Item 1: Opening remarks by the President and adoption of the agenda

2. The President welcomed participants, and specifically Mr Imed Selatnia of Algeria, who was taking over as List B Convenor, and Mr Porfirio Pestana de Barros, of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, as Co-convenor for the same list. Mr Carlos Amaral, of Angola, and Mr Nazareno Cruz Montani Cazabat, of Argentina, joined the meeting as friends of Sub-Lists C1 and C3 respectively.
3. The agenda was adopted with the addition of the following four items under Other business:
 - Ñ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) regional conference for Latin America and the Caribbean, as proposed by the Sub-List C3 Convenor;
 - Ñ Mandatory age of separation, as proposed by the President;
 - Ñ Update on Senior Management appointments, as proposed by the President; and
 - Ñ Press articles on sexual harassment and Rome-based agencies (RBAs), as proposed by the List A Co-Convenor.

Item 2: Updates on the OpEx exercise

4. Management noted that the Operational Excellence for Results (OpEx) exercise was on track: reassignment to implement the decentralization process had started, the design work on operational realignment had been completed and a new organigram was being finalized. The non-operational areas would be considered in the next phase. Additional details were provided on how the staff and the staff association had been involved in the process.

5. The List A Convenor noted the importance of holding a seminar to keep the Executive Board updated on the progress on and mechanisms for results measurement. The President suggested that the Office of the Secretary make arrangements for an informal seminar covering both commitments under the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD11) and OpEx, possibly on 22 March (or another feasible date before the April Board session).¹
6. Convenors agreed to this suggestion, and requested that an update on the United Nations reform process be included. Notwithstanding the request for a joint RBA seminar on the UN reform process made by the Board in December 2017, the Sub-List C3 Convenor noted the need to discuss this matter separately with each institution and share their positions on the reforms that directly affected them. The planned joint RBA informal seminar could therefore be arranged later.
7. The List B Convenor was informed that the new decentralization map was still a draft and could only be shared once final.

Item 3: Updates on IFAD11

8. Management thanked Convenors for their role in following up with their respective Lists regarding the announcement of IFAD11 pledges. Convenors noted that as at the time of the meeting and since the end of December, six additional pledges had been received, bringing the total to 21 countries pledging to IFAD11.
9. In the same light, Management called for the Convenors' support in obtaining confirmation from those Member States intending to pledge at the fifth IFAD11 session to be held on 12 February and/or at the upcoming session of the Governing Council.

Item 4: Forty-first session of IFAD's Governing Council (13-14 February 2018) and related events

10. Mr William Skinner, Officer in Charge, Office of the Secretary of IFAD (SEC), presented the draft schedule of work and schedule of events for the Governing Council, recognizing the input provided by Convenors to ensure that the session was as interactive as possible to encourage a high level of engagement by Governors.

¹ Subsequent to the meeting, 26 March was confirmed for this informal seminar.

11. He reminded participants of various logistical matters, including the four-minute time limit on interventions, the different options to submit statements now that general statements would not be delivered in the plenary, and the procedure for delegates to request the floor.

(a) Events

12. Convenors expressed appreciation for the work done to ensure a dynamic Governing Council session, welcoming the topics of the interactive sessions and the fact that in-house moderators had been selected. They reiterated the importance of holding concrete discussions with Governors, with a focus on issues and take-aways of relevance to IFAD.

13. Given that the interactive sessions would be held in the plenary hall, Convenors requested that the setting be such that the Governors felt truly involved in the discussions and not mere spectators. The Officer in Charge, SEC, confirmed that arrangements were under way to improve the setting for those sessions and ensure that speakers were projected on a screen visible to all.

14. The List C Convenor remarked on the timing of the Governing Council, which happened to coincide with Chinese New Year celebrations. He was assured that the Alternate Governor for China would have an opportunity to speak at the session on the first day, under the agenda item on IFAD10.

(b) Business items

15. The Officer in Charge, SEC, recalled the items that would be considered by the Governing Council for approval, and thanked Convenors for their coordination and for submitting nominations for Executive Board representatives and alternates.

Item 5: Executive Board retreat (18-19 April 2018²): planning and related documentation

² Convenors and Management are discussing the possibility of bringing the Board forward to start on the afternoon of Monday 16 and end on the evening of 17 April. The retreat would then be brought forward accordingly.

16. The retreat would take place immediately after the April Board session, and the facilitator, Mr Bob Wright, had been confirmed as agreed with the Convenors. Convenors noted that they would be contacted by the facilitator shortly to provide their input on the retreat planning and agenda.
17. Convenors reiterated the importance of the retreat for team-building and governance-strengthening. The List A Convenor noted that the Audit Committee was preparing a paper on its effectiveness beyond reporting to the Board, which would be shared at the retreat.
18. Convenors requested that the informal nature of the retreat, the session with the Independent Office of Evaluation, and the good practice of inviting Convenors who were not Executive Board representatives be maintained.

Item 6: Financial matters

- (a) Roadmap for 2018 onwards, and
 - (b) Draft terms of reference for the Transition Framework Working Group
19. The recently appointed Associate Vice President, Chief Financial Officer and Chief Controller, Financial Operations Department, Mr Alvaro Lario presented the Roadmap for 2018, highlighting the three pillars risk strategy – namely, strengthening financial risk and control, expanding financial instruments and borrowing strategies, and asset-liability management framework. He also provided an overview of planned work on the Transition Framework and the terms of reference (TORs) for the associated working group. Additional details were provided on the next steps by Ms Ruth Farrant, Director, FMD.
 20. Convenors reiterated the expectation that they would receive a comprehensive review covering financial, operational and ethical risks for both scenarios, i.e. should IFAD go ahead with market borrowing or not. They agreed with the view that the comprehensive review should be done without duplicating resources and costs, by taking into consideration the individually conducted reviews. Management noted that to ensure a quality product more time would be required to undertake this comprehensive task. A concrete way forward would be discussed and agreed at the April Board session.

21. The TORs of the Transition Framework Working Group would be presented to the informal seminar on 13 March for further discussion and finalization for the April session. The List A Convenor underlined the importance of having very well defined TORS, and informed the meeting that List A would provide written comments in the next few days.
22. Regarding the possibility of holding an informal seminar on the feasibility study, it was noted that the seminar could be an opportunity to present an update on the status of finance-related matters³.

Item 7: Other business

(a) FAO regional conference for Latin America and the Caribbean

23. The Convenor for Sub-List C3 shared information about the regional conference, which was scheduled to take place in Jamaica on 5-8 March, and enquired whether the President could consider joining the conference on 8 March. The President assured the Convenors that Management would follow up on this in the context of the RBA collaboration.

(b) Mandatory age of separation

24. The meeting discussed the possibility of postponing this item to the September Board, to ensure harmonization with other RBAs. After a short discussion, it was agreed that the item would still be presented to the April session.

(c) Update on Senior Management appointments

25. The President noted that the recruitment processes for the pending Associate Vice President positions were under way and would be finalized soon. For the Director-level positions, the first and second level interviews had been completed. Finally, in filling other vacant positions for the proposed hubs and for a strengthened headquarters in a decentralized context, particular attention was given to internal candidates.

³ Further to the meeting and discussions within Management, given the agreed comprehensive scope of the independent financial review ToR, future informal technical seminars to explain the outcome of the independent review will cover all aspects of the financial architecture, including incremental risks related to market borrowing and its feasibility.

26. Regarding the Secretary of IFAD, due diligence was being conducted and the position would be filled as soon as this process was concluded.

(d) Press articles on sexual harassment and RBAs

27. The List A Co-Convenor raised the issue reported most recently in the Guardian newspaper regarding a culture within the United Nations environment that allows for sexual harassment and promotes silence by staff, who are uncomfortable with reporting harassment issues. Management indicated that this same item had been discussed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).
28. Management underlined that IFAD had a zero-tolerance policy for any form of harassment. While there was no specific policy on sexual harassment, there were a number of systems in place such as the Ethics Office, the whistle blower policy, and other measures implemented by the Office of Audit and Oversight to deal with these issues.
29. IFAD's Executive Management Committee would discuss this matter and, following a benchmarking exercise, would work on a strengthened set of policies as well as communication campaigns to raise awareness in-house.
30. Convenors expressed appreciation for the fact that IFAD was not mentioned in such articles, and the assurances that this matter was being carefully monitored in-house. They welcomed the planned actions and internal communications campaign to ensure that staff felt safe and protected in reporting incidents of harassment.

Item 7: Closure

31. The President thanked participants for their active participation in the meeting. The notes would be posted as a public document, in line with the transparency action plan approved by the Executive Board at its 122nd session held in December 2017.
32. The next Convenors and Friends meeting was scheduled for 28 March. With the next meeting, as agreed to by Convenors and Management, a paperless approach would be introduced.