

Notes on the meeting of Convenors and Friends

14 June 2018

1. The third meeting of Convenors and Friends with IFAD's President in 2018 was held on Thursday, 14 June in room C600 starting at 3 p.m.

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

2. The President welcomed Convenors to the meeting. He recognized Ms Anna Gebremedhin from Finland as List A co-Convenor and Mr Antonio Sá Ricarte from Brazil as Friend for Sub-List C3. Mr Médi MOUNGUI from Cameroon joined the meeting later as a Friend for Sub-List C1. The President also officially welcomed Mr Donal Brown, Associate Vice President, Programme Management Department.
3. The President informed participants that he had just returned from a positive meeting in Sweden, and shared updates on IFAD11 and ongoing corporate priorities as detailed below:

Ñ IFAD11. All efforts were underway to mobilize the remaining US\$339.6 million required to meet the IFAD11 replenishment target of US\$1.2 billion. Thus far, pledges totalling 74 per cent of the IFAD11 target and instruments of contribution totalling US\$90.6 million had been received. The President noted that additional pledges were expected to arrive in July and a favourable outcome for IFAD might be possible after the United States Senate Appropriations Subcommittee's mark-up session on 19 June. An update on IFAD11 would be presented to the Executive Board in September 2018.

Ñ Rome-based agency collaboration. A retreat for the principals of the Rome-based agencies (RBAs), organized by the former United States Representative to the RBAs, was scheduled for July, and a joint RBA field mission to Niger was planned for 15-18 August. An invitation to join the field mission would be issued to all IFAD Board members.

Ñ Decentralization process. The second wave of Programme Management Department staff reassignments had been completed. Of the nine reassignments, seven had been resolved amicably and two were still under discussion. Management was taking the required steps to ensure business continuity. The President also advised that IFAD's Senior Management team was now almost complete.

4. The agenda for the meeting was adopted with no changes.

Item 2: Executive Board country visits

- (a) Feedback from the 2018 Executive Board country visit to Ethiopia (14-18 May)

5. Mr William Skinner, Officer-in-Charge (OIC), Office of the Secretary of IFAD (SEC), shared highlights on the recently concluded Executive Board country visit to Ethiopia, which had been attended by seven Executive Board representatives from Algeria, Brazil, China, Cameroon, Kenya, Mexico and Nigeria along with six IFAD staff. The visit had successfully achieved its objectives of: strengthening the partnership between IFAD's Executive Board, Management and the Government; critically reflecting on the portfolio's progress; and discussing the way forward and future collaboration. Mr Alex Shi, the List C Convenor, would prepare the report on the visit for presentation at the September Board session.
6. Mr Shi expressed appreciation for a fruitful and successful visit, and for the IFAD Country Office staff, who had worked hard to organize meetings with senior government officials and other United Nations agencies. He noted with surprise that the World Food Programme (WFP) had not been represented at the RBA meeting in the field, and also regretted that List A had not been represented on the country visit.
 - (b) Update on the 2019 country visit to the Republic of Cameroon
7. As agreed at the 123rd session of the Executive Board in April 2018, after consulting the Convenors, the Secretariat had issued a request for the Board's vote by correspondence to approve the dates for the country visit to the Republic of Cameroon in 2019. The OIC of SEC informed Convenors that as of the close of voting on 4 June, the number of votes required for validation had been received, as well as those necessary to approve the proposal.
8. The visit to Cameroon was thus scheduled for 22 to 26 July 2019. A communication on the results of the vote by correspondence would be posted for the Board on the Member States Interactive Platform (MSIP) and an information note would be issued for the September Board session.
9. Regarding the vote by correspondence, the List A Convenor noted that, as already communicated to the Secretary, it had been difficult for some members to access the documents posted on the MSIP. Mr Skinner thanked him and members for bringing this issue to his attention as soon as it had arisen and explained that IFAD's Information

and Communications Technology division had taken action to ensure that access to MSIP was seamless.¹

Item 3: Executive Board retreats

(a) Feedback on the Fourth retreat (18-19 April 2018)

(b) Update of the Matrix of issues and actions to strengthen IFAD's governance

10. The OIC of SEC referred members to the draft report on the Executive Board retreat, which had been shared with Convenors for their preliminary comments. He also highlighted the comments and suggestions provided by members through the form distributed at the close of the retreat.
11. Convenors expressed appreciation for a well-organized retreat. List A noted that in the future, it would be useful to reopen discussions on contentious issues from the previous Executive Board session in the retreat's more relaxed and informal atmosphere. It was also noted that an opportunity had been missed to follow up on some Board deliberations at the retreat, such as on the projects for Uganda and Mozambique. In addition, members hoped there would be another opportunity to discuss the framework for collaboration between IFAD's President and Executive Board to discuss the status and complete the circle.
12. Furthermore, members noted that a longer session with the President at the next retreat than was planned in years past would be much appreciated.
13. The President reminded Convenors that the retreat was for the Board and they had the prerogative to shape the agenda to fit their objectives.
14. List C requested a future discussion on the collaboration between Management and IFAD's Independent Office of Evaluation. Referring to interventions by lists at Executive Board sessions, List C raised the level of representation as an issue that hampers their level of contribution to the discussions, especially given the use of sub-list statements.
15. List B noted the importance of the Board retreat as an opportunity to discuss ways to harmonize Member States' objectives with those of IFAD, and welcomed the informal setting of the retreat and other events as a useful means of reducing knowledge gaps.

¹ Following the meeting, the issue was resolved and members confirmed to SEC that they were no longer experiencing access issues.

16. To ensure timely preparation for the next retreat, Members agreed to utilize the same facilitator, Bob Wright, and the same venue.²
17. An informal meeting with Convenors was scheduled for 19 July. Among other items planned for discussion, Convenors would provide additional feedback and work with SEC to finalize the retreat report, including the selection of photographs for presentation at the September Board session for information. Based on this report, at the informal meeting Convenors would identify items for inclusion in an updated matrix of current issues and actions, which is revised after each Board retreat. The matrix will be presented to the Board in September for approval.
18. Some of the ideas proposed by members for inclusion in the matrix – and consideration at future retreats – included: an enhanced focus on IFAD-specific issues; increased interaction with Management; additional informal discussions among members and opportunities for other informal activities; discussions on United Nations reform; the framework for collaboration between the President and the Board; and IFAD’s financial tools.

Item 4: Attendance of observers at Executive Board sessions

19. The OiC of SEC introduced the draft paper prepared by the Office of General Counsel and SEC on the attendance of observers at IFAD Board sessions. This document was to be discussed with Convenors as requested by the President after the December 2017 Board session. The main proposals contained in the document are summarized below:
 - Ñ The current power of the Executive Board to invite representatives or persons to present views before the Board would not vary, but rather, changes would be made to the authority granted to the President. The Board would delegate to the President, as Chair of the Board, the authority to invite observers to Board sessions and meetings subject to an informal no-objection process with Board members.
 - Ñ Invitees would follow the proceedings as silent observers and no participation would be allowed in closed sessions or for any other item than those the Chair or the Executive Board might deem should be restricted .
20. The General Counsel noted that revising the procedures would allow flexibility for the President to invite more than one observer to Board meetings, which was not currently

² SEC has since contacted the venue, which is unfortunately not available for the dates immediately after the April 2019 Board session. A new venue will be proposed at the informal meeting with Convenors scheduled for 19 July.

the case. The Board would be asked to approve, through an informal no-objection process similar to the one foreseen for the approval of projects under the lapse-of-time procedure, the institutions proposed to be invited. In addition, it was clarified that invitations would be issued to institutions, which would then advise on which representatives would attend.

21. The Convenor for Sub-List C3 noted that when the procedures for attendance at Board sessions are next reviewed in the future, Management should consider the legal procedures for inviting representatives from countries who might be interested in attending. The Friend for Sub-List C1 commented that the current document outlining the delegation of authority to the President to invite observers should be clear on the fact that this was a separate process from Member States attending as observers.
22. Comments provided by Convenors would be considered in finalizing the document for the September Board session.

Item 5: Joint meeting of the Rome-based Agencies (14 September 2018)

23. Charlotte Salford, Associate Vice President, External Relations and Governance Department, recalled that the executive heads of the RBAs had come together at a historic occasion to sign the first ever trilateral memorandum of understanding on 6 June at the Council of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
24. She summarized the envisaged structure of the second joint informal meeting of the three agencies, which would be hosted by IFAD on 14 September, and expressed appreciation for Convenors' feedback on the draft concept note shared prior to the meeting. WFP had also provided extensive input, which would be taken into account in the final concept note; FAO's input was expected soon.
25. In particular, two themes had been identified in consultation with Convenors for the two thematic sessions to be held during the meeting: linkages between youth employment and migration; and the role of partnerships.
26. List A thanked Management for taking into account their suggestion to include topics of interest in the presentation to be delivered at the start of the meeting, such as United Nations reform, gender and nutrition.
27. Furthermore, Convenors:

- Ñ Urged Management to highlight the background of the call for a joint meeting and show forward linkages to Agenda 2030; and focus more on the impact of RBA collaboration – beyond joint meetings – rather than on agency-specific issues, especially in the context of the thematic sessions.
- Ñ Noted the need to allow more time for members to intervene and respond to issues at the meeting, and to encourage dialogue between the executive heads of the three RBAs and Member States.
- Ñ Pointed to the need to strengthen RBA partnerships on the Committee on World Food Security.
- Ñ Welcomed the fact that key the take-away messages from the meeting would be highlighted in the President’s closing statement and addressed in the joint progress report on RBA collaboration that would be presented to the RBAs’ governing bodies before the end of 2018.

28. The President welcomed the feedback and noted that the Secretariat would emphasize dialogue on critical issues such as the impact of RBA collaboration. He also reiterated his agreement that formal statements should be avoided in favour of open dialogue focusing more on future improvements rather than past actions. Regarding the topics, focus would be on specific deliverables rather than a broad range of topics. Management would also follow up with the CFS Chairperson to discuss partnerships.

Item 6: Preparatory work for the Forty-second session of the Governing Council

29. With the President’s approval and positive feedback from Convenors, the proposed theme for the Forty-second session of the Governing Council (GC42) – Rural Innovation and Entrepreneurship – was confirmed. Reiterating their appreciation for discontinuing the delivery of general statements in plenary and for the format of the 2017 session, Convenors urged Management to identify means for further enhancing interactivity and ensuring a dynamic atmosphere at the session. In preparation for GC42, they also placed emphasis on the following issues:

- Ñ ensure that proposals for discussions around the theme be tailored to the IFAD context to ensure that they contribute more positively to the Fund’s operations;
- Ñ make the session more meaningful by holding regional group meetings on specific issues;

- Ñ find an alternative means for governors to gain visibility at the session given the absence of general statements;
- Ñ ensure a focus on strategic issues; and
- Ñ include a roundtable on financial matters.

30. A more structured proposal, incorporating the feedback provided, would be shared with Convenors in early July.

Item 7: Other Business and closure

31. The Friend from Sub-List C1 sought clarification about the procedure in the event of the Board Chair's absence. The President and the General Counsel recalled the Rules of procedure of the Executive Board in relation to this issue. As proposed by the President, it was agreed that the General Counsel and SEC would prepare options for consideration by the Convenors at their next informal meeting.
32. In closing, all Convenors and the President joined the List A in thanking Mr Skinner for his excellent work in building solid relationships with members during his tenure as OIC of SEC.
33. The President thanked participants for the constructive discussion and reminded them that the notes on the meeting would be posted as a public document as per current practice.