

Notes on the first 2019 meeting of Convenors and Friends

6 February 2019

1. The first 2019 meeting between Convenors and Friends and the President of IFAD was held on Wednesday, 6 February in room C-600, at 3.00 p.m.

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

2. The President welcomed Convenors, and friends from Ghana for Sub-List C1; Nigeria, for List B; Panama for Sub-List C3; and the United Kingdom for List A.
3. The President informed participants that a special session of the Board would be held on 11 February to consider the application for non-original membership received from the Republic of Poland.
4. The agenda for the meeting was approved with no modifications.

Item 2: Forty-second session of the Governing Council (14-15 February 2019)

- a) Business items
- b) Events

5. The President recalled the arrangements for the proposed conversations with Governors on three topics at the forthcoming Governing Council (GC42). Following a discussion on this issue, it was noted that:
 - Ñ No panels would be held. Instead, some Governors who had already been approached would serve as lead discussants to help motivate discussions.¹
 - Ñ In selecting the lead discussants, regional balance would be sought.
 - Ñ Management would introduce the topics prior to opening the floor for discussion.
 - Ñ The Chairperson would be the moderator and would summarize the key points of the debate.
 - Ñ Management would take note of the views arising from the discussions and make appropriate follow up after the session.
 - Ñ The guiding questions posed to lead discussants to be made available to all Members².

¹ Further to the meetings, it was agreed that the interventions would be made from the floor. Lead discussant would have a five minute limit for their interventions, while a three-minute limit would be set for interventions from other delegates.

² The guiding questions are included in GC 42/INF.3, which has been posed on the Members' Platform prior to GC42.

6. Regarding the approval of the business items prior to the discussions, Management clarified that the conversations with Governors were not part of the business items requiring approval.
7. Convenors emphasized that Members be specifically informed regarding the gate closure at FAO of 8:45 am in advance of the Pope's arrival and to arrive at FAO for the inaugural session by 8.30 a.m.³
8. Management clarified that the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council provides that the President should prepare the provisional agenda, with the approval of the Executive Board - not the Governing Council Bureau.
9. For future sessions, the List B Convenor requested that consideration be given to inviting smallholder farmers to the Governing Council, to showcase the impact of IFAD's work in the field.

Agenda item 3: Executive Board related matters

a) Proposal to have four-day Board sessions

10. Convenors mentioned that IFAD was cited as a good example for holding efficient Board sessions and accordingly, four-day sessions should be avoided.
11. The meeting discussed several options for ensuring that the two-day Board would be sufficient to cover the strategic items for consideration. In particular:
 - Ñ With respect to the proposal to streamline the approval of IFAD-funded projects and programmes, which had been originally submitted to the Board in September (and December) 2018, it was agreed that Management would follow up with members for comments bilaterally and through an informal seminar, and then submit the document to the Executive Board for approval through a vote by correspondence.
 - Ñ To ensure consideration of COSOPs and other documents at informal seminars to reduce the amount of time spent at the formal Executive Board sessions.
12. Management confirmed that sufficient number of days were blocked on the RBA calendar for the scheduled Board sessions.

³ Further to the meeting, a reminder was posted for all Governors in this regard.

b) Overview of the 126th session of the Executive Board (2-3 May 2019)

13. Convenors took note of the various informal seminars organised before the May 2019 Board session, and of the measures Management was taking to ensure that the schedule of work was manageable. For example, items for approval and review would be considered first, and those for information later.
14. The President reassured Convenors that, as per standard practice, a draft provisional agenda would be shared with them via email for their feedback, following an internal preparatory meeting with Management.

c) Debt Sustainability Framework (DSF)

15. Management confirmed that a briefing note on the DSF had been posted to facilitate Members' discussions and to reach out to capitals prior to providing feedback on the two issues raised at 125th session of the Executive Board (EB125): (1) the need to reach agreement on fine-tuning the preferred option (Option 2 -set out in EB 2018/125/R.44) for DSF reform; and (2) to find a solution for the percentage eligibility of countries to DSF for the IFAD11 programme of work, to be approved by the Executive Board no later than May 2019.
16. The List A Convenor conveyed a message from the Audit Committee Chair emphasizing the deadline for providing feedback of 6 March 2019. List A would provide feedback after their meeting on 13 February 2019.
17. The other Convenors were encouraged to mobilise their Lists and provide their feedback as well.

d) Results Framework for the strategy and action plan on environment and climate change 2019-2025

18. Based on the comments provided at the EB125, Management was liaising with Board members to finalise the results framework and action plan on environment and climate change.
19. Convenors welcomed this update, including the confirmation that the final framework would be presented to the Board in May 2019 for approval.

e) Update on Concessional Partner Loans (CPLs)

20. Management informed the Convenors that the CPL for India would formally be signed in the margins of GC42, and that the agreement would come into full force and effect

after review by the Audit Committee in April 2019 followed by the approval by the Executive Board.

21. Furthermore, discussions on the CPLs for France and Finland were ongoing, and it was hoped that both could be presented to the Audit Committee and the Executive Board at the same time as the CPL for India.

Agenda item 4: Executive Board Retreat (6 – 8 May 2019)

22. Convenors noted that a consultant was working with the Management to assist in the preparation of the discussion on the governance issues raised at the EB125. The consultant would conduct a Board survey, a benchmarking of IFAD with other international financial institutions and UN agencies, and contribute to preparing a draft paper for the forthcoming Board retreat.
23. While highlighting that there were no specific problems regarding governance at IFAD, Convenors noted that it was opportune time to reflect on improving working methods of various governing bodies. They also underscored the need to take into account specific characteristics of IFAD's governance structure overall, including the processes and functioning of subsidiary committees and working groups, as well as efficiency and effectiveness.
24. Management communicated that a venue for the retreat had already been identified. Responding to the request to consider a venue closer to the city centre, many members noted the importance of being in a venue away from the city where they could fully focus on the retreat agenda and engage with each other.
25. The importance of a wider forum to discuss the future of IFAD, especially with respect to IFAD's financial architecture, was noted. In this regard, the option of holding the usual Board retreat, and subsequently a separate event open to Members to discuss issues related to IFAD's future was floated.
26. The President confirmed that through forthcoming informal meetings with the Office of the Secretary, Convenors would be involved in shaping the agenda for the retreat and agreeing on other logistical arrangements. Some Convenors wished to know Management's expectations regarding results to be achieved at the retreat.

Agenda item 5: Other Business

27. No items were raised for consideration under other business.