

Notes on the first meeting of Convenors and Friends in 2020
04 February 2020

1. The first meeting for 2020 between Convenors and Friends and the President of IFAD took place on Tuesday, 4 February 2020 in room C-600, from 3.00 p.m.

Agenda item 1: Opening remarks by the President and adoption of the agenda

2. The President welcomed participants to the meeting. He specifically welcomed the friends - from List B, Dr Yaya Olaniran (Nigeria); from sub-List C1, Mr Médi MOUNGUI (Cameroon); from sub- List C2, Dr. Rajender (India), and from sub-List C3 Ms Patricia Rodríguez and Ms María Cristina Laureano Laureano Peña (Dominican Republic). He also congratulated Mr Benito Santiago Jiménez Sauma (Mexico) on his new role as overall Convenor for List C. The President also officially welcomed Ms Marie Haga, the newly appointed Associate Vice President, External Relations and Governance Department (AVP ERG), and Mr Luis Jiménez-McInnis in his new capacity as Secretary of IFAD.
3. The meeting noted that the Republic of Poland had joined IFAD, bringing the membership to 177.
4. On recent external engagements, the President mentioned his mission to Davos in January, highlighting that there was continued interest in IFAD's engagement with the private sector.
5. Referring to the Food Systems Summit (FSS), to be held in 2021, the President informed participants that efforts were underway to create momentum for the event. He had met with Dr Agnes Kalibata, the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy for the 2021 Food Systems Summit.
6. He shared specific updates on the FSS:
 - The Secretary-General was yet to make the decision on whether the FSS would be held in Rome or New York.
 - The Rome-based Agencies (RBAs) were playing a key role in the arrangements for the FSS, and secretariats would be established in Rome, Nairobi and in New York for coordination purposes, with the Head of the secretariat to be based in Rome. The budget for the first year was being finalised.
 - Nominations would be sought for the Steering and Advisory Committees of the FSS.

7. On another topic, the recent Executive Board's informal seminar held to discuss the Targeted Capacity Investment (TCI), the President acknowledged the need to ensure clarity on several issues prior to the April Board session to facilitate smooth decision-making, and sought Convenors' feedback. Accordingly, and taking into account members' request for more detailed information beyond what is normally included in PowerPoint presentations, Management would present a paper to the Audit Committee. Given time constraints, the paper would most likely be posted in English first, with languages to follow as soon as possible.
8. The agenda was adopted with the addition of one item under Other Business proposed by the List C Convenor, regarding the possibility of delivering a statement about IFAD's replenishment at the UN General Assembly.

Agenda item 2: Preparations for the Forty-third session of the Governing Council (GC43)

9. The Secretary of IFAD updated participants on the preparations for the Governing Council, and Convenors made the following comments:
 - The List A Convenor thanked the Secretariat for the very good programme prepared for the session. She also noted the need to plan for the entire year to ensure coherence among the discussions foreseen at different events and create a common understanding and ownership by members. The List A Co-Convenor further proposed that a well-laid out plan be made available in the form of a living document, showing how the activities throughout the year would build on the planned IFAD12 launch.
 - Clarification was provided on the difference between the Interactive sessions, at which a panel including also external partners was expected to discuss a specific topic prior to opening the floor to the audience; and the Conversations, which were exclusively targeted to Governors, and would be kick-started by a short presentation from Management. The guiding questions for the conversations with Governors had been posted in advance to facilitate adequate preparation for the sessions.
 - The Convenor for Sub-List C2 (China), informed the meeting that due to the concerns related to the novel coronavirus (nCoV) outbreak, the Permanent Representation in Rome would participate in the Governing Council as the delegation from the capital had cancelled their travel plans. The President expressed solidarity to China, and noted that the RBAs heads had sent a letter to the President of China.

10. Regarding Poland's membership, they would be welcomed as member at the upcoming GC session. Participants also noted that Poland had expressed interest in joining List A. Responding to a query by the List A Convenor about Poland's expected contribution to IFAD, the Director, Global Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation (GPR) noted that conversations were planned aimed at ensuring Poland become an active contributor.
11. Convenors discussed the important aspect of enhancing IFAD's visibility during the GC session and other events such as the FSS. It was noted that the President would be traveling to Addis Ababa to address Heads of State and encourage contribution to IFAD12; the AVP, ERG said that GPR and the Communication Division (COM) were working with APCO (a global public affairs company) on country advocacy strategies and action plan; and COM had already initiated work with Mr Idris Elba and Mrs Sabrina Elba as advocates for IFAD.
12. List C raised the concern that holding the GC session in FAO may undermine IFAD visibility. Management stated that there were measures in place to compensate for holding the GC at FAO, such as adequately branding the premises with IFAD materials.
13. While recognising that holding the GC session at FAO was a positive aspect of RBA collaboration, Convenors expressed the view that other events such as the FSS should be managed carefully in terms of agenda setting and venues to ensure adequate visibility for all agencies.
14. Management informed Convenors that the Farmers' Forum had expressed interest in participating in the FSS.

Agenda item 3: Consultation on the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's resources (IFAD12) – first session

15. All relevant documentation for the first session had been posted and meetings between the Lists and the External Chairperson of the Replenishment had been scheduled. An official communication on the composition for List A and B was still pending.¹
16. Management welcomed the comments made regarding the coherent planning of inter-connected events. In pushing for IFAD12, Management was focusing on demonstrating delivering results and strong engagement with Member States through advocacy initiatives.
17. Commenting on items and documentation, the List C Convenor proposed that the "Case for investment" and "Strategic Directions" be considered together. Regarding the proposal for working with the private sector and civil society organisations,

¹ Subsequent to the meeting, List A and List B communicated the final IFAD12 composition to the Secretariat.

Management underlined that a clear message would be conveyed that this approach would be in addition to working with, and not replacing, governments. Management note that certain issues were repeated in the documents to ensure that the non- EB members of the replenishment were also on the same page.

18. Responding to why working with MOPAN was relevant, Management explained that the MOPAN report provided a wider context in making a case for IFAD's performance. The key point was to communicate the role of IFAD in rural development and transformation, with the objective of securing the resources required to achieve this goal.
19. Management acknowledged the List A's comment that IFAD's investment case needed to be strengthened. The President advised that the focus of the IFAD12 sessions would gradually range from more technical and logistical matters, to determining and agreeing the future direction for various issues, and consolidating and marketing the agreed direction.

Agenda item 4: 129th session of the Executive Board (EB129)

- a) *EB129 draft provisional agenda, including a list of the meetings planned around the session.*
- b) *Management of statements on COSOPs and project/programme proposals in-session for increased efficiency and focused discussion*
- c) *Proposal by sub-List C1 Convenor at EB128 to allow more non-EB countries to participate as Observers at EB sessions for discussions on project/programme proposals*

20. Convenors and Friends expressed appreciation for the efficient December 2019 Board session and noted that:
 - In future, the strategic discussion with the President, which was highly welcomed, should focus on one or two items only;
 - the time limit for interventions should be continued as a practice;
 - the schedule as set should be maintained during the session;
 - List statements as a way to avoid repetitions were important for efficient time management.
21. Commenting on the agenda setting, Convenors expressed the view that while they were consulted in the process and provided feedback, attention should be paid also to the Board's diversity and the need to ensure strategic discussions.

22. Convenors discussed how to make the pre-Executive Board consultations more effective and agreed that, to the extent possible, repetitions of issues raised during consultations should be avoided at Board sessions. Management pledged to continue streamlining the process, in agreement with members, and sought Convenors' support in ensuring the highest attendance as possible at Board consultations.
23. A participant urged to keep the Board sessions short – two full days at most. The President noted that the increased workload of the Board was due to the ongoing reforms in IFAD, and proposed that this matter be included in the Governance Action Plan.
24. The Sub-List C1 Convenor noted the need to avoid bunching of COSOPs and project/programme proposals at the December session, and asked Management to explore ways of distributing them more evenly across the three sessions.
25. As a means to further enhance the Board's efficiency, the Sub-List C2 Convenor reiterated the important role of the subsidiary bodies and their reporting modalities to the Board.
26. Lastly, Convenors agreed to the proposal made by the Sub-List C1 Convenor that those representatives of Member States not on the Board composition be allowed in the room as silent observers when the Board would consider project/programme proposals for their countries. The Secretariat would prepare a paper to be submitted to the Board's approval for the April session.

Agenda item 5: Update on the Governance Action Plan

27. The Secretary of IFAD briefed participants on the positive developments so far regarding the steps included in the Action Plan. The Plan would be updated accordingly and shared with Convenors.
28. The sub-List C Convenor pointed out that documentation shared less than two weeks in advance of a session in all languages should not be discussed at Board sessions. The President clarified that indeed, the standard practice would be maintained to share documentation in all official languages simultaneously. However, in instances of tight timelines, and where the English version of a document was ready, the possibility of posting it in advance would be considered.

Agenda item 6: Executive Board retreat

29. Convenors requested having a break between the Board session and the retreat, in order to prepare adequately for the retreat session. The proposal was to hold a two-day Board session, have a half-day break, and then proceed to the retreat.

30. The venue for the retreat was confirmed as Castel Vecchio as done in 2019, and Convenors agreed to the possibility of recruiting Mr Bob Wright as facilitator again, should he be available.²

Agenda item 7: Other Business

Briefing about IFAD12 at the UN General Assembly

31. The Convenor for List C proposed organise a briefing about IFAD12 at the UN General Assembly, as had been done for the IDA replenishment, with positive results. It was suggested that while IDA briefing had taken place after the replenishment process, IFAD could organize a similar briefing during the IFAD12 consultation process itself. Management and Convenors welcomed this idea as a way to raise IFAD's profile.
32. The List A Co-Convenor also urged that a similar opportunity be explored during the Spring Meetings in Washington D.C.
33. In closing, Convenors agreed to hold the second meeting on 2 April in the morning, instead of the afternoon as was the practice. The meeting would be organised from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.
34. Finally, the President's meetings with the Lists prior to EB129 would be held on 15 April.

² Other options are being explored as subsequent to the meeting Mr Wright advised that, regretfully, he will not be available for the EB retreat dates.