

Notes on the Fourth Meeting of Convenors and Friends in 2020

24 June 2020

1. The fourth meeting for 2020 between Convenors and Friends and the President of IFAD took place on Wednesday, 24 June 2020. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom video-conferencing.

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

2. The President welcomed participants to the fourth meeting this year. Friends in attendance were for List A: Mr Denis Cherednichenko, from the Russian Federation; for sub-List C1: Mr Médi MOUNGUI, from Cameroon; and, for sub-List C3: Ms Rebeca Cutié Cancino, from Cuba.
3. The President referred to the recent senior appointments. Mr Dominik Ziller would join IFAD as Vice-President on 1 August from his position as Director-General for International Development Cooperation at the German Federal Ministry for Development Cooperation (BMZ); Ms Meike van Ginneken, would come on board in early October as Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department, from her position as Chief Executive Officer of the SNV Dutch Development Organisation; and, Ms H  l  ne Papper would join the Fund on 1 July as Director of the Communications Division, from the United Nations Department of Global Communications, where she was Director of the United Nations Information Center for Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela based in Bogot  .

Agenda item 2: Update on IFAD's response to the COVID-19 pandemic

a. Impact on and repurposing of operations

4. The Associate Vice-President, Programme Management Department, provided an update on the impact of COVID-19 on the Fund's programme of work and how operations were being repurposed to respond to the threats posed to rural livelihoods.
5. Convenors of all three Lists welcomed the Fund's reactivity and flexibility to respond to urgent needs of smallholder farmers. Convenors underlined Members' appetite for detailed information and regular updates on what IFAD was doing. They remarked that disseminating news on the Fund's response to COVID-19 would raise the profile of IFAD and contribute to the campaign for support for the Twelfth Replenishment of the Fund's Resources (IFAD12).

6. While Management emphasised that the situation was changing on a daily basis, most countries in the regions of Asia and the Pacific; East and Southern Africa; and, Latin America and the Caribbean had reported major disruption or complete stop of operations (for short periods). In most projects in the Near East, North Africa and Europe and West and Central African regions had registered minimal or no disruption.
7. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, IFAD had taken three sets of measures to support its Member States:
 - repurposing resources under ongoing projects to respond to the immediate problems that COVID-19 has created for target groups;
 - supporting COVID-19-related policy analysis in countries, in collaboration with the Rome-based agencies and United Nations Country Teams; and,
 - establishing and operationalising the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility, a dedicated fund to respond to the immediate and short-term constraints of rural producers.
8. The repurposing activities meant drawing on loan resources that had not been used, reallocating these within projects to finance specific COVID-19 focused activities, exclusively upon formal request from governments. At the time of reporting, repurposing of \$66m across 40 projects in 28 countries has been approved, and a further \$99m across 87 projects in 50 countries is in the pipeline. The numbers of repurposed projects were increasing rapidly.
9. In response to a request, Management agreed to share the key points of the update with the group and to provide regular updates to be passed on to decision-makers.
10. Convenors expressed appreciation in advance as such updates would contribute to increasing IFAD's visibility given that the Fund's work did not always get due publicity. Convenors reiterated the point that donors needed to know IFAD in order to make informed decisions on funding the organization's work.

Agenda item 3: 130th session of the Executive Board (EB130) and related events

11. Management provided an update on preparations for EB130 – the September 2020 session of the Executive Board - and related events. The agenda had been drawn up to ensure business continuity, and to streamline proceedings by proposing some items for review through the online commenting feature

on the Members' Platform, and others for approval through vote by correspondence.

- A four-day virtual session was foreseen. In this regard, a proposal for amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board to allow for the conduct of Board sessions by virtual means would be submitted for approval through a vote by correspondence. It was noted that arrangements would be made to allow for a restricted number of those wishing to use the facilities at IFAD Headquarters to do so – in line with health and safety measures.
- A motion, for an automated voting system at IFAD would also be issued for approval through a vote by correspondence. In this regard, Management expressed appreciation for members' participation in the informal seminar on the proposed automated voting system, that had taken place prior to the meeting of Convenors and Friends.
- Management proceeded to highlight a number of issues included on the EB130 agenda: the high-level preview of the programme of work and budget; the revised IFAD grants policy; the update on IFAD's approach to addressing SH/SEA; the report of the Search Panel on the selection of the Director of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD; the Corporate-level evaluation on innovation and the standard September Board independent and self-evaluation reports – the ARRI and the RIDE.
- The Board would be invited to an informal seminar on the rural resilience programme on 13 July and be called upon to approve a proposal on the rural resilience programme at the Board's September session.
- An update on implementation of the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility would be provided at the forthcoming Board session.
- Important financial matters for consideration included the integrated borrowing framework, the new liquidity policy and the now-standard oral update on the credit rating exercise.
- Concluding, Management proposed holding an Executive Board retreat in early 2021, conditions permitting. This could be organized either immediately after GC44 or immediately after the April Executive Board session.
- Convenors agreed to consult within their respective Lists and share feedback. Based on this, Management would formulate a proposal to be presented to the Board.

12. Convenors thanked Management for a well illustrated EB draft provisional agenda. They provided feedback based on lessons learned from EB129, the Fund's first virtual Board session. They called for a more organized dissemination of documents for the forthcoming session. They asked Management to adhere to clear and established timelines with shorter, more focused documents, presented on the Member States Interactive Platform by theme and not only in sequential order as was the case currently.
13. Convenors urged Management to respond to comments published by Members on documents to be reviewed on line in a more timely manner. Management confirmed that steps were being taken to improve this process.
14. With a view to reducing the length of the meetings by streamlining the agenda, one Member asked that the online commenting feature be used to review the item on Capital Adequacy, thus removing this from in-session discussion as the document had been discussed previously. Management explained this document was based on data released twice a year. New data would be available for the report to be submitted for the September Board. While discussion was not necessary each time the report was presented, Management sustained that there was value in sharing findings.
15. A member asked that approval of the Integrated Borrowing Framework be postponed to the December Board given the impact of IFAD 12 discussions on its finalization. Management agreed that the Framework could be reviewed at the September session and submitted for approval in December.
16. Convenors questioned the rationale for presenting the Grants Policy for approval at the September Board, also noting links with discussions on this planned to take place within the context of IFAD12 at its July session. Convenors explained that IFAD 12 discussions could go beyond decision on an amount to be allocated for grants and could impact the grant policy itself.
17. While Management sustained that approval of the policy should not preclude decisions taken by IFAD12 on financial scenarios, they agreed that the Grant Policy could be reviewed at the September Board and, dependent on the outcome of discussions at the IFAD12 session in July, approval could be deferred to the December Board.
18. In response to a question on the possibility of the PBAS Working Group being reconvened, Management confirmed that internal discussions with the PBAS Chairperson were ongoing and that it would be useful for the Group to meet based on the outcome of IFAD12 discussions on transition/graduation.
19. The General Counsel was asked to speak on the selection process for the Director of the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD. The group was

- informed that the selection process had begun, and that the search panel would present its report to the Evaluation Committee, which would in turn make its recommendation to the Executive Board . The Executive Board was responsible for electing a Director for a six-year, single, non renewable period.
20. A request was made to increase the visibility of the Evaluation Committee and, to this end, it was decided that the Evaluation Committee Chairperson would deliver an oral report on its main findings to the Board.
 21. Finally, List Convenors remarked on the proposed timing of the President's meetings with Lists and consultations on projects and programmes in advance of a Board session. They asked that these be re-scheduled from late August to early September. Management agreed and confirmed that new dates would be shared in due course

Agenda item 4: Consultation on the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD12)

22. Management provided feedback from the June meeting and an update on the way forward for IFAD12.
23. Documents for the July meeting would include the Business Model and Financial Framework Paper, an updated version of the Mainstreaming Themes Paper, the draft IFAD12 Resolution and IOE's recent Corporate Level Evaluation on IFAD's engagement in pro-poor value chain development, which had already been reviewed by the Executive Board – the latter two documents being open for comments online.
24. On the transition/graduation debate, the IFAD12 Chairperson and Management would intensify efforts to support consensus among Members by engaging with Convenors and Representatives.
25. Members welcomed this initiative and endorsed the urgent need for informal dialogue. The group considered innovative ways to engage with all three Lists by facilitating informal conversations. In terms of general outreach, one Member shared the experience of an agency, which had begun to offer virtual country visits. Management informed that it had developed a similar tour of a project in India, including virtual meetings with beneficiaries, project staff and government officials and it was considered a very powerful tool.
26. Management confirmed plans to improve communication about the IFAD12 campaign, including enhancement of the use of social media to raise awareness and demonstrate the results of IFAD's work, as well as timely notice to Convenors and representatives around upcoming events.

Agenda item 5: Other business

28. The group was reminded that the next and fifth meeting of Convenors and Friends would be held virtually and would take place on 31 August 2020.