

## **Notes on the Fifth Meeting of Convenors and Friends in 2020**

**31 August 2020**

1. The fifth meeting for 2020 between Convenors and Friends and the President of IFAD took place on Wednesday, 31 August 2020. The meeting was held virtually via the Zoom meeting application.

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

2. The President welcomed participants to the fifth meeting of the year. Friends in attendance were, for List A: Mr Denis Cherednichenko, from the Russian Federation and Mr Bruce Campbell, from Switzerland; for sub-List C1: Mr Médi MOUNGUI, from Cameroon; and, for sub-List C3: H.E. Carlos Cherniak, from Argentina. He also welcomed the new Vice-President, Mr Dominik Ziller, to his first meeting of Convenors and Friends in his new role.

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

3. Management presented an update on IFAD's demand-driven response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Steps were being taken to lessen the impact of COVID-19 on IFAD's operations, including through the "fielding" of remote missions and increased use of digital technology.
4. In response to observations that Management should strive to ensure complementarity of repurposed projects and projects under the Rural Poor Stimulus Facility (RPSF) with existing projects and the Fund's medium to long-term vision, Management reassured the group that this objective was key to the Fund's approach. Repurposed funds had mainly been used to support access to inputs, markets and digital information as well as to provide cash transfers and some emergency equipment and nutrition support.
5. Thirty projects had been approved for funding from the RPSF. These projects represented a mix of short- and longer-term COVID-19 response initiatives and covered various initiatives from providing inputs to support the upcoming production cycle, or storage equipment to avoid post-harvest losses to establishing digitised systems for local banks and village savings groups, and establishing digital marketing platforms.
6. US\$4.4 million had been raised for the RPSF, thanks to a generous contribution from the Canadian Government. Approximately US\$35-40 million in additional contributions from other Member States were expected to be received in the coming months.
7. A pipeline of private sector investments had been identified and the first round of pilot proposals would be approved before the end of 2020.
8. Work was also ongoing in partnership with UNCTs, FAO, WFP and other development agencies, to conduct rapid assessments of the situation in the agricultural or rural sector, often with an emphasis on the challenges faced by women and youth.
9. Lessons learned in this initial phase would be factored into the review of new projects as part of quality assurance.

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

10. Management provided an overview of the upcoming Executive Board and related events.
11. The amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board had been approved through vote by correspondence, thus codifying the possibility for IFAD to hold Board sessions by virtual means – which would be the case for the September EB.
12. Convenors were advised that, due to current uncertainties with the state of affairs globally and in agreement with the Egyptian authorities, the 2020 EB country visit to Egypt would be postponed to 2021, when Management would be better positioned to judge the feasibility of such a visit. Country visits planned already for 2021 and 2022 would be pushed forward by one year accordingly.
13. Management advised that the Lists' preference to hold the EB retreat immediately after the April 2021 Board session had been noted. Tentative dates would be Wednesday, 21 to Friday, 23 April. The exact schedule and format would be discussed with Convenors in due course.
14. Speaking on behalf of List A, the Convenor noted the significant number of meetings leading up to the Board, including a conflict with another RBA meeting. Management advised that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had also been felt in the organization of governing body meetings and scheduling challenges and conflicts among the RBA meetings were being addressed with the Secretariats of the other two RBAs.
15. Members noted that some documents were excessively long and a request was made to extend the deadline for receipt of comments on certain documents open for e-discussion. Management took note of the comment on the length of documents and agreed to extend the deadline for comments as requested.
16. In addition to agreeing with List A's observations, other List and Sub-list Convenors called for close collaboration among the RBA agencies when scheduling meetings to avoid conflicts.
17. The List C Convenor added that August was typically a holiday period and asked that, in future, the month be kept free of meetings. Members also suggested re-scheduling some of the events planned for early September.
18. Management understood that many representatives were responsible for more than one RBA agency and confirmed that it would take the group's feedback into account going forward. It would be challenging and possibly not possible to identify alternative dates for meetings scheduled in the coming weeks, in part due to COVID-19 and the number of meetings which had been deferred to the last quarter of the year.
19. The List C Convenor urged Management to review the Member States Interactive Platform with respect to the presentation of proposals through the vote by correspondence procedure. The Convenor hoped that all proposals for consideration under this procedure would soon be available in a dedicated space on the Platform.

20. Convenors raised the issue of racism and asked Management i) to inform the Executive Board of how IFAD was dealing with racism at its headquarters and in field offices and ii) to provide members with the opportunity to discuss racism at governing body meetings, in line with discussions on sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse.

21. Management committed to acting upon both requests.

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

22. Management briefed the meeting on preparations for the third session in October, at which the draft IFAD12 replenishment report, including with regard to financial scenarios, commitments, RMF, and outcomes of the transition/graduation discussions, and a revised draft IFAD12 resolution would be discussed. The possibility of holding informal discussions on IFAD12 proposals with key partners such as Farmers Organizations and Indigenous Peoples was also being explored and Convenors were invited to share this information with their Lists with a view to ascertaining members' interest in attending such a discussion.

23. Management recalled the agreement reached at the second session whereby the IFAD12 External Chair would convene a small group of IFAD12 delegates from all three Lists, to further discuss the topic of transition/graduation. Two meetings had already been held and the Chair had also consulted widely bilaterally. Management – in consultation with the External Chair – had prepared a note with proposed updates to the original four pillars of its graduation approach, and circulated it to Members of the group for their feedback. Once agreed, the note on the four pillars would be presented to the entire Replenishment Consultation at its third session and ultimately, integrated into the replenishment report.

24. Convenors asked about the possibility of extending the timetable for negotiations and holding the final session of the IFAD12 Consultation early in 2021 rather than in December 2020 as foreseen. On one hand, this would allow more time to conclude discussions on key issues while, on the other hand, it could hinder countries obliged to pledge in 2020 in line with national fiscal policies.

25. Management agreed to consider the option of holding the final and concluding meeting in two parts, the first in December and the second early in 2021, prior to the Governing Council in February. Members would be consulted for their views.

**Agenda item 5: Update on the Forty-fourth session of the Governing Council**

26. Management provided a brief update on arrangements for the Governing Council in 2021. In light of uncertainties with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, Management was considering the option of holding a virtual session should conditions not allow for the meeting to be held in physical presence.

27. Implications of holding a virtual Governing Council session included the need to amend the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council and, in this regard, proposals would be submitted to Members.

28. Management shared the items foreseen for consideration at the Governing Council as well as the proposed overarching theme identified, namely: *Rural development: a pre-requisite for global resilience*. Consultations were ongoing with the GC Bureau and Convenors would be updated as preparations progressed.

29. Given that the Appointment of the President of IFAD would be considered at the forthcoming session, testing of an automated voting system was underway. The Secretariat had been in touch with colleagues at the African Development Bank (AfDB), which had recently adopted an automated voting system when appointing its new President, and the Inter-American Development Bank, which would hold an election for its President in September/October, to benefit from their experience and lessons learned. Again, the Convenors would be updated regularly on progress made.

#### **Agenda item 6: Dates for Convenors and Friends Meetings in 2021**

30. Management shared the dates identified for Convenors and Friends' meetings in 2021 and confirmed that these had been chosen following consultation with the RBAs. Meetings would begin at 3 p.m. in line with established practice. The 2021 meeting dates had been published on the Member States Interactive Platform and were:

- First meeting – Thursday, 4 February;
- Second meeting – Thursday, 8 April;
- Third meeting – Tuesday, 15 June;
- Fourth meeting – Thursday, 9 September; and,
- Fifth meeting – Thursday, 25 November.

#### **Agenda item 7: Other business**

31. Responding to a query on the Fund's Corporate Induction programme, given that many newly appointed Member State representatives were expected to take up duties in September, Management confirmed that a Corporate Induction seminar was scheduled for 9 October.