

**Notes on the Second Meeting of Convenors and Friends in 2025
28 April 2025**

1. The second meeting of 2025 for the Convenors and Friends with the President of IFAD took place as a breakfast meeting on Monday, 28 April, at IFAD Headquarters. All Convenors were present, and four Friends were in attendance: for List A, Mr Ronald Meyer (Germany); for List B, Dr Yaya Olaniran (Nigeria) and Ms Estalina Aimara Baez Ramírez (Venezuela); and for List C, Mr Gerson Mateus Dos Santos Francisco (Angola).

Agenda item 1: Opening and Adoption of the Agenda

2. The President announced recent staff appointments, including the new AVP FOD Ms Diane Melville, who will take up her role on 1 June 2025, and the new NEN Director Mr Naoufel Telahigue, previously a Country Director.
3. The President also provided updates on his participation in recent and upcoming high-level engagements, including:
 - a. The African Union Assembly (Addis Ababa, February);
 - b. The Finance in Common Summit (South Africa, February) – IFAD as a leader in engagement with Public Development Banks (PDBs). A memorandum of understanding with the Development Bank of Southern Africa was signed.
 - c. The London Ministerial (London, March) – meeting with the new UK Development Minister and with Parliamentarians.
 - d. The Nutrition for Growth Summit (Paris, March);
 - e. The World Bank and IMF annual meetings (Washington DC, April);
 - f. The State funeral of His Holiness Pope Francis (Rome, April); and
 - g. Upcoming meetings in May, namely the Asian Development Bank annual meetings in Milan and the UN Chief Executives Board meeting, to discuss the UN@80.

Agenda item 2: Updates on corporate initiatives

a. Capital optimization initiative

4. Management introduced the capital optimization initiative, which would be presented at the upcoming Annual Informal Meeting (AIM) of the Executive Board. A document was under preparation and would be made available ahead of the meeting.
5. The update at the AIM would promote a better understanding of IFAD's financial model and related trade-offs, and would provide information requested by Members on the delivery and impact side, and indicative financial scenarios. The capital optimization initiative would allow IFAD to enhance its concessional lending capacity, providing borrowers the appropriate resources for their development needs, while ensuring the appropriate governance and risk management safeguards.

b. Agility in operations initiative

6. Management provided an update on the operational and institutional agility initiative, which aimed to boost the Fund's efficiency and effectiveness of

operations, making it more responsive, agile and impact-driven. This initiative builds on the successful outcomes of the People, Processes and Technology Plan (PPTP), which concluded in 2022, and the recalibration exercise, initiated in 2024. Management outlined the three strategic priorities of the initiative: operational effectiveness – simplifying operational processes to reduce the use of human and financial resources; strengthening results-based management – through a stronger link between budgeting and results, and the simplification of IFAD’s results framework; and an integrated and agile strategic workforce planning approach, which was also reflected in the reduced vacancy rate which currently stood at about 10 per cent.

c. IFAD’s decentralized offices: adjustment to new business needs

7. The country metrics for the multi-country offices and the IFAD country offices’ structure and staffing had been revised in 2021, at the outset of the Decentralization 2.0 process, and in 2023 following IOE’s evaluation of IFAD’s decentralization process. These metrics served to inform decisions on which offices should be opened, upgraded or closed based on portfolio size, operational complexity/fragility, future business opportunities, and poverty/hunger indices. Management informed Convenors that the country metrics had been re-run earlier this year, and that the weighting methodology had been adjusted. As a consequence, the top 25th percentile in the updated metrics ranking had remained stable and the number of country offices remained unchanged (47). Adjustments were being proposed to the Country Directors’ (CDs) position grading (P-4/P-5), and the location of Programme Officers at P-3 level was being consolidated within Regional Offices. Such proposed changes were cost-neutral and were expected to bring about some savings. Participants were also informed that the operationalization of the Regional Office in Bangkok was expected to be completed by July, while the Regional Office in Panama City was currently operating out of temporary premises, and the permanent premises were expected to be operational by June 2026.
8. Further to a request for additional information, Management clarified that CDs were subject to annual performance assessments, and that a key area of focus was ensuring that staff with relevant expertise and experience were selected for such positions. CDs were also subject to the reassignment process, which was currently undergoing an external review. Management highlighted the importance of national staff, who were crucial for the implementation of projects and programmes; their titles had been changed to “Country Programme Coordinators”. The grading of national positions was being reviewed, and opportunities for upskilling and training were continuously being pursued.

Agenda item 3: Governance Matters

a. Feedback on recent governing body meetings

9. The Secretary reported back on the forty-eighth session of the Governing Council, held on 12–13 February 2025 at IFAD headquarters. The session recorded the highest level of participation in the last five years, and feedback received through the survey had been positive, with the Governors’ Roundtable receiving the highest ratings. Delegates appreciated the well-structured programme, the relevance of the thematic discussions and the opportunities for engagement.

b. 2025 Annual Informal Meeting of the Executive Board

10. The Secretary provided an update on the 2025 AIM, which was scheduled to take place on 12-13 May in Castel Gandolfo, Rome. The AIM programme had been developed in consultation with the List Convenors and the event facilitator, and would be made available on the Member States Interactive Platform, along with background documentation.

c. 144th session of the Executive Board

11. The Secretary provided an overview of the items planned for discussion at the 144th session of the Executive Board (EB144), which would take place on 14-15 May at IFAD headquarters, and invited Convenors to provide any early feedback from the Lists.
12. The List A Convenor explained that the request for the Programme for Sustainable and Competitive Agriculture in Costa Rica (CSMART) to be removed from the Lapse-of-Time procedure and be discussed during EB144, was to better understand the rationale for IFAD's re-engagement after many years. It was clarified that there were no issues with the programme per se. While participants noted it would be useful to review the IFAD Graduation Policy, Management clarified that the policy was still in the initial stages of implementation and required time to generate lessons learned prior to review.
13. The List A Convenors queried the change in terminology in specific Executive Board documents, namely the operational documents, IFAD's Strategic Framework 2025-2031 and the Climate, Environment and Biodiversity Strategy 2025-2031.
14. Finally, on the statement by the IFAD Staff Association (ISA), Convenors noted it would be useful to receive the statement before the session.

d. Forthcoming governing body meetings and related events for 2025

15. The 2025 governing body meetings calendar was shared with representatives.

Agenda item 4: Other Business

16. In closing, the President thanked participants for attending and looked forward to their participation in EB144.