

Notes on the First Meeting of Convenors and Friends in 2026
29 January 2026

1. The first meeting of 2026 of the Convenors and Friends with the President of IFAD took place on Thursday, 29 January, at IFAD Headquarters. All Convenors were present, except for Mr François Gautier (France), who sent regrets and was represented by Ms Léa Kwaternik-Borderon. Six Friends attended: for List A, H.E. Ambassador Christophe Schiltz (Luxembourg) with Ms Sophie Folmer; for List B, Dr Yaya O. Olaniran (Nigeria); for sub-List C1, H.E. Ambassador Josefa Sacko (Angola) with Mr Gerson Dos Santos Francisco, and Mr Asmerom Kidane (Eritrea); and for sub-List C2, Dr Jujavarapu Balaji (India). The Secretary welcomed H.E. Ambassador Laura Elena Carrillo Cubillas of Mexico, who has recently arrived to assume functions as the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the UN agencies in Rome, and attended the meeting together with the sub-List C3 Convenor.

Agenda item 1: Opening and Adoption of the Agenda

2. The President welcomed Convenors and announced key senior management appointments, including Mr Andrzej Antoszkiewicz (Canada/Poland) as Associate Vice-President, Corporate Services Department, and Mr Fernando F. Pons (Spain) as Chief of Staff and Chief Transformation Officer. The President explained that the creation of the Chief Transformation Officer role was intended to strengthen coordination, accountability and delivery of cross-cutting transformation initiatives, with particular emphasis on innovation, digital enablement and operational effectiveness. He also informed that Ms Dina Saleh would serve as Special Envoy for the Middle East through IFAD14 until GC50, leading engagement with Middle East and Gulf partners in support of strategic dialogue, partnerships and replenishment objectives.
3. The President then updated participants on his recent external engagements, including participation in the Global Forum for Food and Agriculture in Berlin, where he highlighted the centrality of water, resilience and sustainability to agricultural transformation ahead of the 2026 UN Water Conference, and the World Economic Forum in Davos, where he emphasized that food security and rural development are macroeconomic and stability priorities. He further reported on his participation in the high-level preparatory meeting for the United Nations Water Conference in Dakar, convened by Senegal and the United Arab Emirates.
4. Looking ahead, the President outlined forthcoming engagements, including participation in the World Governments' Summit in Dubai and the Conference on Initiatives for Achieving Food Security in the Arab World, as well as attendance at the Munich Security Conference following the Governing Council. He noted that these platforms provide strategic opportunities to highlight the links between food insecurity, fragility, climate pressures and rural livelihoods, and to position IFAD's work as part of broader efforts to address the root causes of instability.
5. Finally, the President provided a brief update ahead of the Board strategic discussion in April on IFAD's private sector engagement. He emphasized that IFAD is deepening its engagement with the private sector across sovereign and non-sovereign operations to drive inclusion, resilience and opportunity for rural people.

6. At the request of List C Convenor, an item concerning the appointment of a Chair of the Executive Board in the absence of the President of IFAD was added to the agenda under Other Business.

Agenda item 2: Updates from Management

Update on the preparations for IFAD14

7. The AVP ERD reported that preparations for IFAD14 are progressing well, supported by strong and constructive engagement, notably at the December IFAD14 Pre-Consultation, where members broadly aligned around the proposed strategic directions. Participants welcomed IFAD's emphasis on scaling what works in rural economies—through markets, rural employment, resilience, private sector engagement and innovation—while reaffirming the Fund's comparative advantage in reaching the poorest and most vulnerable and provided guidance that has already informed the Strategic Directions paper and will shape the draft IFAD14 Report for the first Consultation session in May. The AVP also outlined next steps, including finalization of the Consultation composition, and described the three IFAD14-related engagements during the Governing Council week: the formal approval of the resolution establishing the IFAD14 Consultation and confirming the External Chair, Ms Marie Haga; the Governors' Roundtable to enable early political dialogue on priorities; and the IFAD14 Launch on 12 February with replenishment delegates, which will kick-off the Consultation process, gather feedback on the Strategic Directions and workplan, and inform subsequent Consultation sessions.
8. The Secretary clarified that the deadline for the receipt of nominations for the Consultation composition is 11 February. Further clarity would be provided on observers access to Consultation sessions in person.
9. On a separate note, the List C Convenor informed that Senegal had expressed interest in being nominated as sub-List C1 member of the Emoluments Committee.

Agenda item 3: Governance matters

Update on the preparations for GC49 and related events

10. The Secretary provided an update on preparations for the 49th session of the Governing Council (GC49), to be held on 10–11 February, noting that a revised programme had been posted on 27 January. Key adjustments related to Day 2, with the Annual Governors' Roundtable consolidated into a single morning session, business items divided between morning and afternoon, and the Governors' Dialogue with the Private Sector moved to the afternoon.
11. The GC week will be preceded on 9 February (Day Zero) by a briefing on governance at IFAD, including the launch of the upgraded Member States Interactive Platform and a presentation of the proposed electronic voting system, and highlighted opportunities for bilateral meetings. Business items would all be considered on Day 2. The Secretary also provided logistical information on badges, access to sessions, luncheon arrangements and meeting facilities for Heads of Delegation.

Forthcoming governing body meetings and related events for 2026

12. The Secretary noted that the full calendar of forthcoming governing body meetings and related events for 2026 is available on the Members' Platform. With regard to the EB Annual Informal Meeting, scheduled ahead of the April Board, the President

informed Convenors that a possible topic could be the ongoing institutional transformations, including operational, financial and organizational changes. He invited Convenors to propose topics and any specific issues or areas of interest for discussion, noting that matters related to the UN80 reform agenda could also be taken up in the context of other meetings, including at the RBA informal meeting.

13. The Secretary recalled that two Executive Board informal seminars are scheduled on 18 February, on the proposed Partial Credit Guarantee Pilot Framework and on the proposed Streamlined procedure for the approval of Memorandums of Understanding or similar agreements, aimed at enhancing operational agility while maintaining the Executive Board's oversight role.
14. The Chief Legal and Governance Officer provided further detail on both items. On the PCG pilot, the CLGO detailed the proposed new financial instrument, its functioning and its benefits. The PCG pilot would cover 1-3 transactions with a total envelope of US\$130 million, with allocations stemming from existing BRAM/PBAS Member State envelope. The CLGO reported that to date approximately 14 Member States requested meetings to discuss the proposal.
15. On the proposed streamlined procedure for the approval of Memorandums of Understanding, the CLGO recalled that the current process has at times proven insufficiently responsive to operational needs. Drawing on experience from the past decade, comparative benchmarking with peer institutions, the CLGO highlighted the need for greater agility while safeguarding Executive Board governance and oversight. The proposal would align the approval of such agreements with IFAD's existing streamlined procedures by delegating authority to the President for MoU agreements involving no financial obligations, subject to clear conditions and an oversight mechanism, with Board members retaining the right to object, abstain or request full Board consideration (during 14 days)

Agenda item 4: Other Business and Closing

16. Turning to the consideration of the Chair of the Executive Board in the absence of the President, Convenors noted that practices differ across institutions. The CLGO clarified that the applicable rule (Rule 10 of the Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board) is clear in that in the absence of the President, the Chair should be assumed by a representative of a Member State. This procedure was correctly followed in December 2024, and concerns could be assuaged through early consultation, without the need for an amendment to the rule.
17. In closing, the President thanked participants and expressed great appreciation to Mr Jan Bade, acknowledging his valued contribution and leadership as Convenor of List A, and welcomed the incoming List A Convenor (Mr François Gautier of France) and Co-Convenor (Ms Susann Nilsson of Sweden).