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Investing in rural people

Synthesis of the second retreat of the IFAD Executive Board

Note to Executive Board representatives

Focal points:

Technical questions:

Cheryl Morden
Secretary of IFAD, a.i.
Office of the Secretary
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2254
e-mail: c.morden@ifad.org

Dispatch of documentation:

William Skinner
Chief
Governing Bodies Office
Tel.: +39 06 5459 2974
e-mail: gb_office@ifad.org

Executive Board — 118th Session
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For: Information

Synthesis of the second retreat of the IFAD Executive Board

I. Introduction

1. In 2015, further to a proposal by the List Convenors and in agreement with the Chair of IFAD's Executive Board, the Board decided to hold annual retreats. The first such retreat was held on 15 April 2015, and a synthesis report of the event was shared with representatives at the 115th session of the Board in September 2015.¹
2. Based on the outcome of that retreat, the Office of the Secretary (SEC) prepared a follow-up plan, which was presented to the Board in December 2015 and revised for submission at its 117th session in April 2016.²
3. As agreed by the Board in December 2015 and at subsequent meetings with Convenors, the second retreat took place from the afternoon of Thursday, 14 April to Friday, 15 April 2016, at Borgo di Tragliata, Rome. The programme of the retreat, list of participants and a selection of photographs from the retreat are attached hereto.
4. On 14 April, Ra it Pertev, Secretary of IFAD, welcomed participants and introduced the agenda and format. He subsequently introduced Bob Wright, the moderator recruited to facilitate informal and open discussions among members.
5. The retreat was structured around three main sessions: an afternoon session (followed by a conversation and dinner with the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD) and a morning session on the next day, both of which were exclusive to Executive Board representatives and facilitated by Mr Wright. The third session brought Board representatives together with the IFAD President and Senior Management, and was facilitated by the Secretary of IFAD.

First Session: Executive Board representatives

II. Planning, purpose and agenda

6. To ensure close follow-up of the requests made by Board representatives further to the first retreat, Convenors had been involved in the planning for the second event, including pre-retreat conversations with the facilitator to capture its purpose. This consultative process continued during the retreat itself to ensure that there was consensus on areas for discussion and emphasis.
7. From these discussions, it emerged that the purpose of the retreat would be to: serve as a space for informal dialogue, involving both listening and questions; build interpersonal knowledge and trust among members; discuss important next steps on the Board's journey towards more effective service and strategic guidance of IFAD; and further strengthen the Executive Board-Senior Management relationship with a view to amplifying IFAD's mission of improving the lives of rural poor people. At the start of the retreat, items for discussion were further streamlined by representatives in order to sharpen the focus on the strategic direction during IFAD10, and on the conversation about the next President of IFAD.
8. In setting the scene, the facilitator cited a recent Wilson Learning study. Retired public and private sector executives were asked what they would do differently if they could relive their careers. The top answers had been: spend more time with family, take more time to build relationships, and invest more time in learning and reflection. The retreat offered an important opportunity to work on two of these areas: building relationships and taking time for learning and reflection. It was underlined that leaders would need to listen, exchange ideas and ask relevant questions, so as to "balance enquiry with advocacy" in their quest to cultivate a leadership vision for the

¹ EB 2015/115/INF.5.

² EB 2015/116/R.34.

organization. The retreat was expected to offer a space to practice good conversation to deepen understanding.

III. The journey to here: Introductions

9. In table groups, members introduced themselves and shared “one thing about yourself that the other table members do not know about you.” Speaking about their hobbies and experiences provided members with a welcome opportunity to learn about each other, setting an informal atmosphere for the activities ahead.

“We rarely have time to introduce ourselves and learn about each other” – Board member

IV. Learning from our past: Looking backwards to see the way forward

10. In an interactive activity, individuals were asked to examine their shared history using wall-posted timelines: personal; agricultural funding and development field; and IFAD and Executive Board. This provided an opportunity for reflection and discussion, and to share stories and perceptions.
11. In three table groups (one per timeline), participants subsequently discussed the timeline data. Key themes, and their implications for the Board, were identified in lively, informal discussions, which concluded with a brief presentation and sharing of reflections, as summarized below.
 - (a) Personal timeline. The timelines revealed the rich diversity among Board representatives in terms of their age (which differed by as much as 30 years), experiences and background. Such diversity was an asset to the Board as it generated a broad range of individual perspectives that could enrich guidance on IFAD strategic priorities.
 - (b) Agricultural funding and development field timeline Participants noted a growing sense of globalization, an awareness of the mounting environmental and natural resources challenges, and increasing variability in economic and market conditions. This implied that Board discussions and planning should (i) emphasize the need for greater policy coherence; (ii) increase the focus on climate change work and natural resources management; and (iii) strengthen resource mobilization.
 - (c) IFAD and Executive Board timeline. Participants identified themes such as an increased concentration on recent events and an apparent lack of institutional memory, the dynamic nature of IFAD as an institution, and IFAD Country Offices becoming drivers of change. These themes indicated the need for (i) additional resources, (ii) a more strategic thrust, (iii) strengthened efficiency and (iv) stronger sense of “institutional belonging”.
12. In conclusion, it was noted that a shared understanding of the past builds community, and provides an important foundation for discussion of the future.

“Remember your past and you lose an eye, but forget your past, and you lose both eyes.” Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

V. Conversation with the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE)

13. Oscar Garcia, Director, IOE, shared a presentation on "Future Challenges for IFAD" to serve as a basis for discussion with participants. The presentation provided an overview of the current trends in terms of real GDP growth by region, global inequality and the fact that the share of wealth of the richest 1 per cent of the world's population will

exceed that of the remaining 99 per cent in 2016; the challenge of climate change; and the prevalence of undernourishment.

14. According to the Director, the analysis of performance trends in IFAD's operations provided by the Annual Report and Results and Impact of IFAD Operations (ARRI) found that over 70 per cent of projects were moderately satisfactory or better for all criteria (gender equality and women's empowerment, income and assets, human and social capital and empowerment, and IFAD's performance as a partner), showing the strong performance of the organization over time. However, there were recurrent issues arising from IOE evaluations, such as weak sustainability of benefits despite IFAD's good capacity for project design; the performance of government as a partner; disbursement delays; limited development of non-lending activities; and weak monitoring and evaluation systems.
15. On the other hand, the key principles of engagement embedded in the IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025 – such as targeting, empowerment, learning, innovation, partnerships and scaling up – provided an opportunity to enhance IFAD's overall effectiveness. Ways of achieving this included attaching sufficient grants to existing projects for complementarity; increasing IFAD's engagement in key sectors for knowledge sharing and learning; improving innovation; and enhancing partnerships with the private sector.
16. The current challenges called for an increased level of investment in the rural sector, diversification of employment opportunities, better access to agricultural technology and financial services, and more sustainable use of natural resources.
17. During the lively question and answer session that followed, the need was highlighted to:
 - (a) Improve results in remaining projects;
 - (b) Strengthen knowledge management and innovations to enable IFAD to readily meet the demand for innovations from various stakeholders;
 - (c) Enhance learning about and from operations through better monitoring and evaluation systems;
 - (d) Enhance quality at entry and address weak sustainability of project impact. In this regard, it was noted that IFAD had strengthened its design capacity and the emphasis on stronger country strategic opportunities programmes (COSOPs) to align country strategies with national priorities. In addition, IFAD had the capacity to design, implement and evaluate projects, and the current corporate-level evaluation on decentralization would seek to find out whether a commensurate volume of human and financial resources was in place;
 - (e) Strike a healthy balance between the need for quick disbursements and the quality of projects approved. In this regard, the existing quality assurance and quality enhancement processes were critical; and
 - (f) Explore additional mechanisms for engagement with the private sector.
18. The Director, IOE, highlighted the delivery of joint List statements by the Board members as a positive way to provide Management with constructive and strong feedback to help in addressing challenges and enhancing the capacity of the institution.
19. To wrap up the first day of the retreat, and given the debate held with the Director, participants suggested key topics for the session which would be held on the following morning. As a result, it was agreed that the second session would cover long-term guidance/vision for IFAD, short-term guidance for IFAD10 implementation, opportunities to further strengthen Executive Board and Senior Management collaboration, and the next President of IFAD.

Second Session

VI. Executive Board effectiveness: A question "safari"

20. In table groups, representatives were asked to consider a specific topic and discuss it based on the questions provided, and then share the outcomes in the plenary.
- A. Long-term guidance to IFAD: 2025-2030**
21. What future opportunities and challenges must IFAD address?
- While no clear agreement on the top priorities was reached, the common view expressed was that IFAD needed to redefine its core mandate and agenda. To this end, some key questions should be posed, such as: What is the unique role of IFAD? What is its niche? What is IFAD's approach to addressing the challenges of rural farmers?
 - IFAD must be focused on its core mandate and agenda once this has been redefined.
 - IFAD should adapt to change, but not too rapidly as this could lead to major risks. A step-by-step approach to change should be followed, as had been the case in resource mobilization and governance structure. Failure to adapt to change could lead to disintegration.
22. What steps can IFAD start taking now?
- Engage in development of a Board-Management joint vision towards "IFAD 2.0".
 - Seek advice from a high-level expert panel to explore different scenarios for IFAD.
23. The key message from the discussion was the need to "Reflect on IFAD 2.0" and to demonstrate IFAD's impact to justify continued support from stakeholders.
- B. Short-term guidance on IFAD10 implementation**
24. What are the key immediate challenges?
- First, quality at entry of projects – and of the portfolio as a whole – should be enhanced. The focus should be on quality rather than quantity, although this may have an effect on portfolio size. For instance, refining the definition of innovation might mean that fewer projects meet the criteria. In this process, expanding on areas such as private sector collaboration, nutrition and climate change mainstreaming should be considered.
 - Second, sustainability of results, which will call for enhanced collaboration and partnerships.
 - Third, the need to increase and diversify financial resources.
 - Fourth, strengthening inclusiveness and governance – the need to agree on a vision and objectives for improved governance.
25. What steps are important now, as we implement IFAD10 commitments?
- In terms of quality and sustainability: focus on project design and M&E; rewarding quality and innovative design; address weak partner capacity ex ante by building IFAD's ability for effective dialogue with partners.
 - Regarding financial resources: diversify financial instruments; explore borrowing possibilities; assess implications for portfolio structure, lending possibilities and long-term sustainable growth; improve risk management and raise financial standards.
 - With respect to governance: agree on a vision and objectives for improved governance. As an example, the Board should be more involved in agenda setting to nurture a sense of trust and ownership.

C. Strengthening collaboration between the Executive Board and Senior Management

26. What progress have we made since last year?
- (a) Better involvement of Convenors in agenda setting;
 - (b) Improved coordination between Management and Convenors;
 - (c) Increased Convenors and Friends (C&F) informal meetings;
 - (d) Enhanced informal seminars;
 - (e) Delivery of joint List statements at Board sessions. In this regard, it was underlined that final statements should be agreed upon by all before they were delivered.
27. Suggestions for continued improvement
- (a) To increase involvement of Convenors in agenda setting the following was suggested: continue joint preparation for the C&F meetings on a regular basis; make meetings more interactive, relaxed and informal; explore the possibility of making C&F documents available to the entire Board; hold C&F meetings in a more informal setting outside the President's office; invite the chairs of the subsidiary bodies and working groups of the Board; and if possible, introduce a rotational Chairperson for the meetings; and hold discussions with Convenors before informal seminars to gauge expectations.
 - (b) The simultaneous role of both President and Chairperson of the Board was noted as a challenge. Board sessions could be improved by ensuring mutual respect and increasing opportunities for informal interactions among Board representatives, with the Secretary and with Management by allowing for regular 15-minute breaks during the morning and the afternoon sessions.
 - (c) With respect to documentation, it would be important to ensure enhanced transparency, as some restrictions on document distribution were not considered necessary. This matter should be discussed at the C&F meetings. In addition, representatives suggested introducing a "search" option for the Member States Interactive Platform; however, they acknowledged that this would have cost implications.
 - (d) Ensure follow-up on messages that the Board deems to be of strategic importance. In this regard, List statements should convey clearer messages to Management on issues of common interest.
 - (e) List C should have three Convenors, one for each sub-List, for better coordination.
 - (f) More interaction with IOE – beyond Evaluation Committee sessions – was suggested as a means of enhancing understanding of evaluation findings.
 - (g) Notwithstanding the valuable assistance of the Secretary of IFAD, Convenors should guide the preparations for the next retreat and be more involved in the set-up. In addition, IOE should be represented.

D. The next President of IFAD

28. What questions should the candidates be asked? Recalling the proposal agreed to by the Board at the recent 117th session, representatives exchanged views on the possible questions to be put to the candidates for the IFAD Presidency. It was agreed that Convenors would meet to consult among themselves and agree on a final list. The questions would be shared at the September Board session and with the Governing Council Bureau for information, and would be attached to the call for nominations to be issued by the end of September. Where submitted, the written responses should be circulated together with the candidate's curriculum vitae.

29. Representatives also agreed that another set of questions would be prepared for the candidates' meeting with the Membership planned for January 2017 ahead of the election to take place in February 2017.

Third Session

VII. Executive Board conversation with IFAD President and Senior Management

30. At the conclusion of the morning session, the President of IFAD, Kanayo F. Nwanze, and Senior Management members joined Board participants for a luncheon, which was followed by a joint afternoon session facilitated by the Secretary of IFAD.
31. At the start of the afternoon session, the President thanked representatives for an interactive 117th session of the Board. He also talked about the implementation of IFAD10 and his vision beyond this period, and about other issues requested by members. Highlights include:
- (a) IFAD10 commitments: Of the 55 commitments outlined in the IFAD10 matrix, 44 were already green (complete) and 11 were yellow (in progress but not completed yet). None of the commitments were red.
 - (b) The IFAD Strategic Framework 2016-2025 focused on pillars, which was a major operational shift that had been made to improve efficiency. The framework extended beyond IFAD10, and the Board would have to review it twice before it elapsed.
 - (c) Management aimed to mainstream cross-cutting themes such as climate, nutrition and gender, as well as develop consolidated approaches for South-South and Triangular Cooperation, and rural youth.
 - (d) Other major aspects were:
 - Scaling up of results such as changing from nutrition-sensitive agriculture to nutrition-driven agriculture.
 - Focusing on institutional development and efficiency, such as restructuring the grants portfolio to boost project impact.
 - Decentralization and field presence.
 - Partnerships beyond the Rome-based agency collaboration, especially public-private-producer partnerships (4Ps).
 - Human resources issues: most of the issues had been resolved, thanks to, inter alia, non-traditional approaches to team-building such as the global staff meeting, and follow-up on staff surveys.
 - The Results Measurement Framework, to which more attention would be devoted.
 - Financial matters: a more in-depth analysis of non-traditional sources of funding such as additional sovereign borrowing was needed, looking beyond Member States, to fund IFAD's work.
32. The question-and-answer session that followed focused on clarifying issues regarding: the status of gender mainstreaming and other-cross cutting areas, revealing the increased attention of recipient countries to gender and climate compared to nutrition; the sustainability of results and the central role played by Governments in this aspect; the IFAD financial framework going forward, as this was a key challenge that needed to be tackled by the Board; and IFAD's engagement in policy dialogue.
33. In terms of additional priorities, the President expressed the view that there was a need to focus on middle-income countries, the performance-based allocation system and fragile situations, and on delivering on the pillars of the Strategic Framework as a

package. This called for a holistic approach. As discussed at the 117th session of the Board, Management would work to deliver an interconnected document with sections on the various priorities and focus areas, describing how these would be addressed. In the long term, in order to develop a corporate decentralization plan that could shape IFAD after IFAD10, the corporate decentralization plan would need to be reviewed to consider what could be operationalized and to identify the model best suited to IFAD's purposes.

34. Executive Board representatives shared the outcomes of the four themes covered during the morning session, with a view to building consensus on key issues and ideas, such as the need for Management and the Board to work together on a vision of "IFAD 2.0". In addition to the issues highlighted in section VI above, the following points were raised:
- (a) Criteria for selecting the next President of IFAD. The President highlighted that the next President should have charisma and the ability to attract people and convince them to contribute; in particular, they should be truly passionate about the mission and vision of IFAD.
 - (b) Attendance of informal seminars should be encouraged by creating a less formal atmosphere conducive to more open discussions. On a related matter, the idea of "Ask the Manager" was suggested, whereby Board members could meet with members of the Senior Management team (possibly once a year) to ask questions not limited to the themes covered by the informal seminars.
 - (c) Induction for Member States. In addition to what was currently provided, an induction booklet could be developed, tracing the history of major corporate undertakings, such as the evolution of decentralization.
 - (d) Holding additional informal sessions and meetings closer to the Governing Council session.
 - (e) More proactive use should be made of the tools available to Convenors, such as the A3 overview of Board agendas.
 - (f) An increased number of informal consultation sessions (not seminars) should be held to take account of the Board's views.
 - (g) Regarding a possible overreliance of representatives on IOE, participants highlighted that a balance should be ensured between IOE, the Board and Management.
 - (h) An improved Board culture was encouraged; one that built constructively on partnerships and avoided a confrontational approach.

VIII. Concluding remarks

35. In closing the event, the President of IFAD remarked that this second retreat had stimulated more frank conversations and he welcomed the retreat as an established practice. He called upon the Convenors and Friends to reflect on how to carry forward these conversations to build on the momentum created during the retreat.

Second Executive Board Retreat
14-15 April 2016
Borgo di Tragliata, Fiumicino, Rome

Programme

Day 1 of the Executive Board Retreat

Thursday, 14 April 2016

14.30	Departure from IFAD
15.45 – 16.00	Welcoming coffee
16.00 – 19.00	Afternoon session for Executive Board representatives (with facilitation) Topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The journey to here: Paying attention to what has heart and meaning• Learning from our past: Looking backwards to see the way forward• Presentation and conversation: Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
19.30 – 21.30	Dinner

Day 2 of the Executive Board **Retreat**

Friday, 15 April 2016

8.00 – 9.00	Breakfast
9.00 – 12.00	Morning session for Executive Board representatives (with facilitation) Topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Board effectiveness: A “question safari” • Synthesis of the evening and morning sessions
12.30 – 14.00	Luncheon with the President of IFAD and Senior Management
14.00 – 16.45 IFAD	Afternoon session with the participation of the President of IFAD and IFAD Senior Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated Executive Board representatives provide a summary overview of discussions and learning from the evening and morning sessions • High-level presentation by the President on "IFAD10 commitments and status of delivery" • Interactive session on "Building and sustaining an effective Board/Management partnership"
16.45 – 17.00	Wrap up and closure
17.00 – 17.45	Reception
17.45	Departure to IFAD

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The Venue

Borgo di Tragliata

Via del Casale di Tragliata 23
00050, Fiumicino
Tel.: +39 06 6687 267 / 392
Fax.: +39 06 6687 130
www.tragliata.it

Other information:

Transportation provided between IFAD headquarters and the venue for Board representatives wishing to avail of this service.

Interpretation provided in the Fund's four official languages: Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

Informal attire recommended.

List of participants
Second Executive Board Retreat
Borgo di Tragliata, 14-15 April 2016

ANGOLA

Représentant(e) au Conseil d'administration

Carlos Alberto AMARAL
Ministre Conseiller
Représentant permanent adjoint
de la République d'Angola
auprès du FIDA
Rome

ARGENTINA

Representante en la Junta Ejecutiva

Claudio Javier ROZENCWAIG
Embajador
Representante Permanente de
la República Argentina ante
la FAO, el FIDA y el PMA
Roma

BELGIUM

Représentant(e) au Conseil d'administration

Guy BERINGHS
Ministre Plénipotentiaire
Représentant permanent adjoint de
la Belgique auprès des organisations
spécialisées des Nations Unies
Rome

BRAZIL

Executive Board Representative

Rafael RANIERI
General Coordinator of Relations
with International Organizations
Secretariat of International Affairs
Ministry of Planning, Budget and
Management
Brasilia

CANADA

David CUMING
Programme Officer
Permanent Mission of Canada
to the United Nations Food and
Agriculture Agencies
Rome

CHINA
Executive Board Representative

ZHANG Zhengwei
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent Representative
of the People's Republic of China
to the United Nations Food and
Agriculture Agencies
Rome

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Mario ARVELO CAAMAÑO
Embajador
Representante Permanente de la
República Dominicana ante
el FIDA
Roma

EGYPT
Executive Board Representative

Abdelbaset Ahmed Aly SHALABY
Agricultural Counsellor
Deputy Permanent Representative of
the Arab Republic of Egypt to
the United Nations Food and
Agriculture Agencies
Rome

FRANCE

Serge TOMASI
Ambassadeur
Représentant permanent
de la République française
auprès de l'OAA, PAM et FIDA
Rome

GERMANY

Martina METZ
Minister Counsellor
Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation
and Development
Berlin

INDIA

Vimlendra SHARAN
Minister (Agriculture)
Alternate Permanent Representative of the
Republic of India to the United Nations
Food and Agriculture Agencies
Rome

INDONESIA

(day one)

Royhan Nevy WAHAB
First Secretary
Alternate Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Indonesia
to IFAD
Rome

(day two)

Des ALWI
Minister
Deputy Chief of Mission
Deputy Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Indonesia
to IFAD
Rome

IRELAND

Executive Board Representative

Earnán O'CLÉIRIGH
Senior Development Specialist/Policy Lead
Inclusive Economic Growth Policy Team
Development Co-operation
Directorate (Irish Aid)
Department of Foreign Affairs
and Trade
Limerick

ITALY

Executive Board Representative

Adolfo DI CARLUCCIO
Executive Board Representative
of IFAD for Italy
Director OECD Affairs
and Financial Markets (Office VII)
Department of the Treasury
Ministry of Economy and Finance
Rome

JAPAN

Executive Board Representative

Osamu KUBOTA
Minister Counsellor
Deputy Permanent Representative
of Japan to the United Nations
Food and Agriculture Agencies
Rome

KENYA

Executive Board Representative

Fabian MUYA
Agricultural Attaché
Alternate Permanent Representative
of the Republic of Kenya to
the United Nations Food and
Agriculture Agencies
Rome

MEXICO

Benito JIMÉNEZ SAUMA
Segundo Secretario
Representante Permanente Alterno
de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos
ante el FIDA
Roma

NETHERLANDS

Executive Board Representative

Wierish RAMSOEKH
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent Representative
of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
to the United Nations Organizations
for Food and Agriculture
Rome

NIGERIA

Executive Board Representative

Yaya O. OLANIRAN
Minister
Permanent Representative of the
Federal Republic of Nigeria
to the United Nations Food and
Agriculture Agencies
Rome

NORWAY

Margot SKARPETEIG
Counsellor
Deputy Permanent Representative of
the Kingdom of Norway to IFAD
Rome

PAKISTAN

Khalid MEHBOOB
Adviser
Alternate Permanent Representative
of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan
to the United Nations Food and
Agriculture Agencies
Rome

SAUDI ARABIA

Salah bin AbdelRazaq AL KHODER
Third Secretary
Alternate Permanent Representative
of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
to FAO
Rome

SWITZERLAND

Représentant(e) au Conseil d'administration

Liliane ORTEGA
Conseillère
Représentante permanente adjointe
de la Confédération suisse auprès
de la FAO, du FIDA et du PAM
Rome

UNITED KINGDOM

Executive Board Representative

Elizabeth NASSKAU
First Secretary
Deputy Permanent Representative of
the United Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland to the United Nations
Food and Agriculture Agencies
Rome

UNITED STATES

Executive Board Representative

John HURLEY
Director
Office of Debt and
Development Policy
Department of the Treasury
Washington, D.C.

VENEZUELA (BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF)

Porfirio PESTANA DE BARROS
Ministro Consejero
Representante Permanente Alterno de la
República Bolivariana de Venezuela
ante la FAO y demás Organismos
de las Naciones Unidas
Roma

IFAD

Kanayo F. Nwanze	President of IFAD and Chair of the Executive Board
Michel Mordasini	Vice-President of IFAD
Shahin Lauritzen	Associate Vice-President Financial Operations Department
Lakshmi Menon	Associate Vice-President Corporate Services Department
Périn Saint-Ange	Associate Vice-President Programme Management Department
Josefina Stubbs	Associate Vice-President Strategy and Knowledge Department
Ra it Pertev	Secretary of IFAD

Photo gallery from the retreat











