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Update on IFAD's Efforts against Hate Speech, Racism and Other Forms of Discrimination

Note to Executive Board representatives

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For: Review

I. Introduction

1. In response to the United Nations Secretary-General's Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, IFAD established a multi-divisional task force co-led by the Communications Division (COM) and the Ethics Office (ETH). In a letter dated 24 March 2020, the President informed the Secretary-General of IFAD's intention to contribute to the strategy and plan of action. The letter was posted on the Member States Interactive Platform.
2. The task force developed a corporate plan of action for IFAD based on the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech (see annex). The IFAD action plan was endorsed by Management and shared on 15 May 2020 with the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide tasked by the Secretary-General to implement the United Nations strategy. The IFAD plan is under implementation. This paper reports on recent developments, current status and next steps.
3. Included in both the corporate action plan and the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD12) matrix of commitment and monitorable actions¹ is the development of an IFAD-wide survey to assess and address the root causes and drivers of hate speech, discrimination and racism. The survey is scheduled to be carried out in 2021 and its purpose is to gather information from across IFAD. The IFAD task force will present the survey results to the Executive Board.
4. A procurement exercise is under way to retain the expertise of a survey service provider. This process will be finalized by end of March. The task force will then work with the selected provider on the development of the survey questions and logistical aspects of the survey. The results of the survey will be essential in developing IFAD's response to hate speech and racism going forward.
5. In order to gather further information and ensure consistency with the approach being taken by the United Nations system, the IFAD task force co-leads met with representatives of the Office of the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide on 1 February 2021. IFAD was praised for its proactive approach, establishment of a task force and action plan, as well as its intention to conduct a survey, which placed it in an advanced position among United Nations organizations. Relevant United Nations system experience was shared and IFAD was invited to join the United Nations Working Group on Hate Speech. IFAD has also been invited to participate in the United Nations Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities under the leadership of the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner.
6. Communications activities are being undertaken by the task force to sensitize staff and provide information on issues related to hate speech and racism. The United Nations Guidance Note on how to address and counter hate speech related to COVID-19 was shared with staff, as was the Secretary-General's video, in which he highlights the rise during the pandemic not only of fear and anxiety but also of hate speech, exclusion and discrimination.
7. More recently, on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2020, a blog was published by the President on the intranet to reaffirm IFAD's commitment to zero tolerance of discrimination, racism and hate speech. This blog follows the October 2020 joint statement of the heads of the Rome-based agencies against racism and all forms of discrimination at the fourth Informal Joint Meeting of the FAO Council, IFAD Executive Board and the World Food Programme Executive Board. The statement was shared on the IFAD intranet and was also made available on the Member States Interactive Platform.

¹ IFAD12 Report, GC 44/L.6/Rev.1.

8. In parallel to the task force's efforts, a new training on diversity and inclusion in the workplace is being rolled out by ETH through divisional staff meetings. The presentation – which revisits IFAD's core values – also discusses barriers to inclusion in the workplace and addresses hate speech and all forms of discrimination.
9. The task force is committed to fully implementing all deliverables in the IFAD action plan and updating the Board accordingly.

Summary of the IFAD hate speech approach and action plan proposal

Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Secretary-General has asked all United Nations agencies to formulate a plan to implement the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. The Secretary-General appointed his Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide to lead the strategy and plan of action, in recognition of the increase in hate speech around the world, and in the broader global context of growing polarization and intolerance. The goals of the strategy and plan of action are “to enhance the United Nations efforts in support of Member States to address root causes and drivers of hate speech” and “to enable effective United Nations responses to the impact of hate speech on societies”. It provides helpful guidance to the United Nations family in understanding this insidious phenomenon and in increasing our efforts to address and counter it at global and national levels.” COM and ETH have been designated to serve as the co-leaders of IFAD’s plan to respond to the Secretary-General’s request. The co-leaders convened an interdepartmental task force composed of representatives from the Administrative Services Division, Research and Impact Assessment Division, Human Resources Division, Office of the General Counsel, Global Engagement, Partnership and Resource Mobilization Division, Operational Policy and Results Division, Information and Communications Technology Division and Environment, Climate, Gender and Social Inclusion Division. The task force discussed the scope of work, goals and first steps. Representatives from the Field Support Unit and the IFAD Staff Association were invited to participate to enable the task force to benefit from the field and staff perspectives. This expanded group met several times in 2019 and 2020. In developing the plan of action, members of the interdepartmental task force liaised with the Rome-based agencies to explore potential collaboration. In 2020, the Executive Management Committee (EMC) approved the proposed action plan.
IFAD goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement a strategy and plan of action based on the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech that reflect IFAD’s mandate, values, governance, and code of conduct, staff, country operations and external partners. Introduce the United Nations and IFAD strategies and plans of action to all staff, non-staff (e.g. consultants, interns), Member States and other partners. Use materials developed by or based on the United Nations strategy and plan of action.
Target audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary audience – Internal audience: the entire IFAD workforce, regardless of duty station or contract type, including Senior Management and staff responsible for policy dialogue with IFAD partners.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary audience – External audience: IFAD Member States and other partners.
Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit to the EMC a proposed IFAD strategy and plan of action based on the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. Once approved, inform the IFAD workforce and Member States.
<p>Phase one: Introducing the subject of hate speech and the proposed plan internally. The internal communication approach will use a variety of internal communication channels and promote two-way dialogue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step 1: Finalize and send a letter from the President to inform the United Nations Secretary-General of IFAD’s plan to act on his request and describe actions to date. • Step 2: Prepare and send a letter from the Directors of COM and ETH to the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and forward IFAD’s action plan. • Step 3: Craft and post a President’s blog on the intranet to (i) share the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech and (ii) inform staff that an interdepartmental task force led by COM and ETH has been established to develop IFAD’s own action plan. • Step 4: Develop key messages on the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech for the EMC and Directors and ask them to have a two-way discussion about this with staff during their departmental/divisional meetings. • Step 5: Share information and planned actions with staff and non-staff on the IFAD intranet. • Step 6: Inform Member States of the Secretary-General’s request and IFAD’s plan through the Member States Interactive Platform. • Step 7: Create digital informational and educational materials based on United Nations products. • Step 8: Post the approaches of the United Nations and IFAD to counter hate speech on the corporate website.

<p>Phase two: Assessing and monitoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With assistance from relevant departments/divisions and the service provider, develop a survey that enables staff to identify personal experiences of hate speech and the extent to which hate speech occurs in their work environment, including whether they have witnessed hate speech incidents among IFAD partners or vendors under an IFAD contract. • Learn from the results and feed as appropriate into the action plan. • Report findings to Management and the Executive Board. • Solicit recommendations on ways to address and ultimately eliminate hate speech. • Keep staff updated through the intranet and propose hate speech as a topic for an interact session (when that becomes possible). • With assistance from relevant divisions, monitor hate speech on public digital platforms in relation to IFAD operations and activities.
<p>Phase three: Education and outreach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use or adapt United Nations materials and training programmes. • Where appropriate, develop IFAD specific training modules to address hate speech and monitor completion. • In consultation with relevant department/divisions, develop and/or enhance mechanisms to support victims. • Take the pulse of the organization regularly through intranet polls.