

Document:	<u>EB 2021/133/INF.7</u>
Date:	<u>14 September 2021</u>
Distribution:	<u>Public</u>
Original:	<u>English</u>

**E**



## **Opening Statement by President Gilbert F. Houngbo**

Executive Board — 133<sup>rd</sup> Session  
Rome, 13-16 September 2021

---

For: **Information**

Distinguished Representatives,

First, let me express my sincere thanks to you all for the time to discuss the issues around my candidacy for the post of ILO Director General in a frank and constructive manner. I want to reiterate my appreciation for the continued trust in the relationship we have built over the years and I assure you once again that I do not take it for granted.

As I informed you, my commitment to IFAD and its mandate remains steadfast. I wish to reiterate that leading to the elections in March 2022, I will put in place measures to ensure proper adherence to the crucial principles of transparency, ethics and fairness.

We meet today just 10 days before the Food Systems Summit and less than two months ahead of COP26.

Our food systems continue to be affected by climate change. You cannot solve one without addressing the other.

We know the benefits of sustainable food systems in generating jobs and providing nutritious diets while also contributing to healthy ecosystems and biodiversity. But they need to function better for the women and men who work within them – providing decent income and livelihoods. This is especially true for small-scale farmers and others employed in agricultural value chains. But we know that sadly, today, this is not the case.

I am sure that you will all agree that the situation is urgent. If we continue along our current trajectory, we will see hunger again and again, and poverty and conflict.

In the past year, global attention has been absorbed by COVID-19. Today, the pandemic rages on, especially in countries without sufficient vaccine supply. But at the same time, make no mistake, the existential threat from climate change is growing.

Madagascar is on the brink of official declaration of famine as a result of climate change, children in Haiti are going hungry in a nation rocked by earthquake and political instability, and countries around the world are facing wildfires, drought and record heat.

In many places, conflict is rising. As a matter of fact, 2020 was the ninth consecutive year in which global peacefulness deteriorated.

Hunger is rising in most of the regions where we work. In Africa, more than 280 million people suffered from hunger in 2020, an increase of 46 million.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These are the challenges that frame our discussion later today on 'Rural Social Protection'.

In these times, IFAD's mandate is more relevant than ever. Three-quarters of the world's poorest people and most of the hungry live in the rural areas of the poorest countries.

In the year of the Food Systems Summit, Biodiversity COP15, the UN COP26 and with strong G20 and G7 commitments to build back better, we need your support to harness the political commitment to ensure IFAD12 is fully funded.

Permit me to update you on where we stand on IFAD12. I think we have made good progress since February thanks to your understanding and generous contributions. We

now have 88 pledges for a total of US\$1.17 billion.<sup>1</sup> This is approximately US\$300 million more than we had at the same point in IFAD11. It represents 75 per cent of our target of US\$1.55 billion.

Let me once again express my appreciation to all those of you who have so far made pledges and transformed them into instruments of contribution. We have received instruments of contribution totalling well above 50 per cent. Therefore, technically, we were able to declare IFAD12 effective as of 18 August.

However, let's face it, we are still far from reaching the US\$1.55 billion target. Based on this, we have prepared a scenario for discussion of the implications of not reaching the US\$1.55 billion target. I'm looking forward to that discussion – or rather to a decision, because where we stand is closer to Scenario 3 of US\$1.35 billion in pledges. And that has an impact on the level of the PoLG.

And finally, there is the Budget. At the end of the IFAD11 cycle, we expect to have achieved the US\$3.5 billion target programme of loans and grants. This is an achievement to be pleased about, especially given the challenge of delivering during the COVID pandemic. And it was done during three consecutive years of operating under a zero real growth budget.

Looking ahead, if IFAD is to double its impact by 2030 without undermining its own financial stability, a real increase in budget is necessary. We have to face this. Without a real increase in the budget, we will be hurting the future of this institution. For both the budget and graduation, we need to reach consensus so that we can move forward in getting ready to implement IFAD12 on 1 January 2022.

Let me conclude by noting the growing recognition of the importance of the food systems, rural transformation and IFAD's place in the global architecture. This institution's capacity to participate to its fullest extent will be determined by the commitment of all development partners, starting with our Member States, ourselves and other partners.

This must be a priority for the global development community.

Thank you.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pledges received as of 13 September 2021.