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Closing Statement
by President Gilbert F. Houngbo

Executive Board — 133rd Session
Rome, 13-16 September 2021

For: **Information**

Closing Statement

Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

We are coming to the end of this 133rd session of the Executive Board.

First, I would like to thank the Board for its strong expression of consensus and commitment to the virtues of dialogue.

I trust you will agree with me that the reform of the Board's modus operandi two years ago is yielding positive results, allowing the Board to focus more on strategic issues and its oversight responsibilities.

Your guidance on social protection for poor rural people highlighted IFAD's value-added, catalytic role and high potential for synergy with others. As you have noted, scaling up proven solutions will help the Fund support the most vulnerable against shocks, protect their productive assets and build their resilience, while keeping ourselves away from the temptation of mission drift. I look forward to your suggestions during our Convenors and Friends' meeting on topics of interest for our future strategic discussions.

Our debate on the high-level preview of the 2022 budget was very rich as usual. Management is committed to a continuous transparent dialogue with you to provide the rationale behind the proposed budget increase and the evolving cost drivers.

Over the last years, IFAD has worked hard to improve efficiency and effectiveness under a zero real growth budget. We are mindful of the global concern regarding administrative budget. Yet, it is highly critical to grant IFAD real growth in its budget if we are to consolidate the gains made. I assure you that the feedback of Members will be incorporated in the finalization of the document for your approval in December.

We also made progress on the agenda for rural finance with the approval of an updated policy and plans for consultations in the coming months to outline an action plan. This roadmap offers an additional opportunity to build on IFAD's track record and expertise to deliver development finance to the rural poor. Management commits to sharing a report of the first year of implementation at the Executive Board session in December 2022, ahead of the regular midterm review.

I am particularly pleased with the constructive debate on the ARRI/RIDE which presents a concrete pathway for Management and IOE to continue advancing the results agenda in a complementary manner.

Your approval of the Graduation Policy is an important step in getting us ready for IFAD12. I am confident that we can move ahead with an implementation that is evidenced-based and grounded in credible, transparent and reliable data.

IFAD's euro medium-term note programme is another bold step towards a level of borrowing in line with our collective ambition. We will continue to count on you in advancing this further.

We have made good strides in mobilizing resources for IFAD12. However, allow me once again to express our great concern that low-income countries will be underserved under the current circumstances with pledges lower than expected.

I would like to reiterate my call to Member States to step up their replenishment contributions so that we are able to deliver a programme of work that is commensurate with the ambition set out for IFAD12. In this regard, I encourage you to consider concessional partner loans as well as bringing your contribution to a 40 per cent increase.

The updates on enterprise risk management, IFAD's global communication and external advocacy, and United Nations development system reform are further milestones that indicate IFAD's increased maturity as a growing IFI that is fit-for-purpose and a specialized agency that is agile. With your support, we will continue improving our effectiveness and efficiency on these priority matters, both on the ground and in terms of corporate culture.

I am grateful for the quality of the discussion we had today on the ongoing decentralization roll-out process at IFAD. Management heard your guidance and advice and will make sure to provide you with a written update in due course.

I see the future of IFAD in our collective ability to bring about change at scale for the rural poor. We commit to bringing these initiatives to prominence at the global, regional and national levels; the Food Systems Summit will be an opportunity to do so.

Before closing, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to IFAD staff who have worked tirelessly to make our deliberations possible.

Stay well and stay healthy and look forward to seeing you in person soon.