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## **Report of the proceedings of the seventh retreat of the IFAD Executive Board**

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**Action:** The Executive Board is invited to take note of this report on the proceedings of the seventh retreat of the Executive Board of 28 and 29 April 2022.

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# Report of the proceedings of the seventh retreat of the IFAD Executive Board

## I. Introduction

1. The first Executive Board retreat was held in April 2015. Finding it to be a productive exercise, the Executive Board decided to hold such retreats annually. The seventh annual retreat of the Executive Board took place on 28 and 29 April at Officine Farneto in Rome, following the Board's 135<sup>th</sup> session.
2. The meeting was organized in a hybrid format, allowing for in-presence attendance as well as virtual participation by representatives unable to attend in person.
3. The purpose of the retreat was to further strengthen IFAD's governance and strategic alignment by bringing the Executive Board together with Management to exchange views and ideas on:
  - (i) The changing external environment and its potential impact on the implementation of IFAD12;
  - (ii) The potential impact of short- and long-term crises such as the war in Ukraine and climate change on IFAD's ability to react and to deliver on its strategy; and
  - (iii) The common understanding of IFAD's direction and priorities, including IFAD's mandate and positioning within the international financial and development architecture.
4. The session was designed by IFAD's List Convenors together with the event moderator, TPC Leadership Group, with the aim of: (i) creating a space for informal dialogue and exchange; (ii) allowing for reflection on global events, their impact on IFAD's work, and how IFAD can maximize its contribution; (iii) understanding and capturing key priorities for the upcoming transition to a new President; and (iv) continuing to build trust and cultivate a productive working relationship between Executive Board representatives and the Executive Management Committee (EMC).
5. The structure of the retreat, which also included an interaction with the Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE), encompassed focused discussions with Board representatives and Management, both in plenary and in small groups, on the issues raised in the presentations. This report provides a summary of the proceedings.
6. The retreat programme and the questionnaire distributed at the event are included as annexes I and II. The list of participants is contained in the appendix.
7. The moderators were: Mr Reinier Labadie, Ms Christina Lombardi-Somaschini and Ms Berrin Bas of TPC Leadership Group.

## II. Day one

8. Networking activities with working sessions in groups, followed by a plenary discussion on the topic: "What is most important for you about being an Executive Board member at IFAD?". Participation: Board representatives.
9. Strategic dialogue 1. Working sessions in break-out groups followed by a plenary discussion. Topic: "Understanding a changing environment and its potential impact on the implementation of IFAD12". Participation: Board representatives.
10. Plenary presentation by Mr Indran A. Naidoo, Director, IOE, followed by a Q&A session. Topic: "A changing external environment and its potential impact on the implementation of IFAD12". Participation: Board representatives.

11. Strategic dialogue 2. Working sessions in break-out groups followed by a plenary discussion. Topic: "Mapping the potential impact of short- and long-term crises such as the war in Ukraine and climate change on IFAD's ability to react and deliver on its strategy". Participation: Board representatives and Management.

### III. Day two

12. Plenary presentation by Ms Jyotsna Puri, Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department. Topic: "IFAD11 results". Participation: Board representatives and Management.
13. Strategic dialogue 3. Working sessions in break-out groups followed by a plenary discussion. Topic: "Increasing the common understanding of IFAD's direction and priorities, including IFAD's mandate and positioning within the international financial and development architecture". Participation: Board representatives and Management.
14. Working sessions in break-out groups with ensuing plenary discussion around the topic "Managing the transition towards the new President". Participation: Board representatives and Management
15. Working sessions in break-out groups with ensuing plenary discussion around "Finding common ground across the different conversations held during this retreat". Participation: Board representatives and Management.

### IV. Main outcomes

16. The main considerations and outcomes of the retreat are summarized below, while detailed information and an account of the proceedings of the working sessions have been captured in the slides and working papers shared during the event and further consolidated into a single "[Survey and virtual flipcharts](#)" document.

#### Day 1

#### **What is most important for you about being a Board member at IFAD?**

17. In this initial session, two key questions were explored: **what is most important for you about being a Board member at IFAD?** (as an open discussion) and **what is one way you want to contribute to this retreat?** (as a mini-survey). "Frankness", "open-minded", "listening", "ideas", "sharing experiences", "different perspectives", "strategic direction" and "moving forward" emerged as key themes of the contributions that Board representatives envisaged making to the retreat. These contributions were fully realized during a lively meeting, characterized by open discussions and active collaboration within and across the individual groups.
18. **Strategic dialogue 1 – Understanding a changing environment and its potential impact on the implementation of IFAD12.**
19. Including a presentation by the Director, IOE, followed by Q&A.
20. **A changing external environment and its potential impact on the implementation of IFAD12.**
21. Some of the questions raised and addressed during the session with the Director of IOE covered key topics such as the challenges of ensuring sustainable development once a project ends (ultimately permitting smallholders to move beyond subsistence farming); the potential of closer collaboration between the Rome-based agencies, ending inefficiencies of over-evaluation and ensuring good quality data; the need for further clarity around the type of poverty IFAD is targeting and the impact it is trying to have (what is IFAD trying to solve?); matching ambition with realism and the potential mismatch between resources and mandate; and the need to properly assess capacity (also at country level), resources and planning capabilities when selecting partners.

22. While it was stressed that the nature of the agency needs to be kept in mind when deciding on the strategic direction, the elements of “learning and unlearning” were discussed given that certain challenges and trends have become permanent and may force IFAD to think in a different way. That said, the overall impression was that IFAD is clearly united in meeting the challenges and fulfilling its mandate in spite of the changing environment in which it is operating.
23. **Strategic dialogue 2 – Mapping the potential impact of short- and long-term crises such as the war in Ukraine and climate change on IFAD’s ability to react and deliver on its strategy.**
24. Some of the reflections related to the prolonged disruption in the trade of agricultural products and inputs, and the repercussions in terms of an overall increase in economic insecurity, pricing pressure, and smallholders’ growing vulnerability to price increases.
- (i) In terms of prioritization, the need to “stay the course” was mentioned several times, as was the necessity to strengthen the crisis response mechanism with an appropriate balance between adaptive crisis response and a “stick-to-the-mandate” approach. Linked to a strengthened and flexible crisis response mechanism, participants also underscored the need to increase IFAD’s agility and ensure appropriate staffing levels. There were also several suggestions to increase IFAD’s visibility.
- (ii) The above seems to correlate well with the discussion under dialogue 1 around both the “learning and unlearning” elements and the need to bear in mind the nature of the agency when determining the strategic direction.

## Day two

### **IFAD11 results – presentation by Ms Jyotsna Puri, Associate Vice-President, Strategy and Knowledge Department**

24. The tangible results that were presented provided a meaningful opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate what IFAD is achieving on the ground. This trigger presentation was also particularly useful to kick off day 2, by offering important inputs for the subsequent strategic dialogue.
25. **Strategic dialogue 3 – Working sessions in break-out groups followed by a plenary discussion. Topic: Increasing the common understanding of IFAD’s direction and priorities, including IFAD’s mandate and positioning within the international financial and development architecture.**
27. This session was very broad. The themes emerging from it were in part similar to those of the earlier strategic dialogues, for example, increasing the IFAD profile, branding, diversification of resources and partnerships.
28. While there seemed to be consensus around the current mandate and positioning of the organization, including the objectives of IFAD (the “what”), less clarity was apparent in the discussions around the key strategies to adopt in order to meet these objectives (the “how”). This seems to represent an important opportunity for further alignment and consensus-building within the Executive Board (and Management), and consolidation and prioritization of the topics addressed.
29. **Working sessions in break-out groups with ensuing plenary discussion around “Managing the transition towards the new President”.**
30. This session consisted of two key questions:
- The risks of the transition process towards the new Presidency, and
  - Suggestions to ensure a smooth transition.
31. The key risks appeared to be a change in priorities, discontinuity in senior leadership, loss of momentum in key processes including IFAD13, the overall

morale and motivation of IFAD staff, the post-COVID period and the food crisis, all of which made it even more critical to select the right candidate.

32. Potential actions to ensure a smooth transition were identified. These included: setting clear priorities; ensuring transparency throughout the process; making sure that the Executive Board and Management balance support with empowerment and reinforce the agreed institutional direction; listening to and answering the concerns of staff; assuring the solidarity of the Board and EMC, and allocating time for the current President's handover to the next President. The question of "how the Board can best support the EMC" was raised, and also the possibility of the new President taking office already in September and joining the Board session in that capacity.
33. The inputs seemed to reflect a general consensus on the key risks and the potential actions relative to this important transition process.
34. **Working sessions in break-out groups with ensuing plenary discussion around "Finding common ground across the different conversations held during this retreat". Participants: Board representatives and Management.**
35. This last session of the retreat was about reflecting on both the themes on which there seemed to be a good level of agreement and those needing further discussion and exploration.
36. Clearly there was common ground around the "what", as related to IFAD's value proposition and mandate, albeit with perhaps the need for greater emphasis on the ability to prioritize. Similarly, there was overall agreement about the upcoming transition process and associated need to ensure good coordination between the Board, Management and staff.
37. Generally, there seemed to be less consensus around the "how", e.g. when looking at IFAD's visibility and global positioning or at topics such as the need to scale up resources. Similarly, what to prioritize (within the context of the IFAD mandate) was flagged and there were several references to the need to further discuss how climate work is to be integrated. There was also a mention of the need for further discussion and exploration around the cooperation and co-creation between the Board and Management.

## V. Suggestions for future retreats

38. The following section presents some considerations provided by the facilitators for future retreats, with the aim of maximizing the added value of retreats for Executive Board representatives as a platform for informal discussion and exchange.
39. **Preparation of the event.** The event would greatly benefit from a consolidation of the broader topics so as to allow for a more focused and prioritized discussion during the retreat. This would in turn support ensuing the Executive Board's decision-making.
40. Preparation of the retreat could involve a survey, a preparatory interview or a combination of both. The Executive Board may also consider creating a pre-retreat briefing pack to bring new members up to speed prior to joining a retreat.
41. Last but not least, it may make sense to appoint a single contact as the senior sponsor of the event.
42. **Timing of the event.** The retreat currently takes place after the formal Executive Board session. The Board may wish to consider holding the retreat beforehand, thus providing representatives with an opportunity to prepare and focus on issues for the formal session.
43. **Format of the event.** While the event has been structured as a working session, it is likely that the Executive Board would benefit from more space and time for

facilitated “free discussions” on specific topics based, for example, on trigger presentations.

44. Given that the two trigger presentations at the retreat had generated interest, adding further such presentations could be helpful in concentrating attention on specific topics.
45. Presentations can be made by members of Management and IFAD staff in the field. It could also make sense to ask Convenors and Executive Board representatives to take up a co-facilitation role for certain sessions.
46. It is worth considering how best to gather the input of IFAD Management, and which format would be most appropriate to stimulate a lively exchange between Executive Board representatives and Management within the context of the retreat.
47. It may be useful to reconsider the current all-day hybrid format. The retreat could instead be organized around in-person sessions, followed by longer sessions involving both in-person and virtual participants towards the end of the day.

## **VI. Closing remarks**

48. This retreat generated an abundance of reflections, considerations and ideas. It would be important to maintain the momentum and seek to condense and structure the content so that it easily be used as a robust foundation for a follow-up retreat or a similar exercise.



## **EXECUTIVE BOARD RETREAT 2022**

**28-29 April 2022**

**Rome**

### **Participants:**

Executive Board representatives (in presence and virtually)  
The President and Executive Management Committee (EMC) (from day 1 – 15.30 onwards)

### **Facilitators, TPC Leadership (3)**

- Ms Berrin Bas
- Mr Reinier Labadie
- Ms Christina Lombardi-Somaschini

### **Retreat objectives (ROs):**

1. A changing external environment and its potential impact on IFAD's implementation of IFAD12
2. Mapping the potential impact of short and long-term crises like the war in Ukraine and climate change on IFAD's ability to deliver on its strategy and to react
3. Increasing the common understanding of IFAD's direction and priorities, including IFAD's mandate and positioning within the international financial and development architecture



<b>Day one, Thursday 28 April</b>
<b>Officine Farneto - Via dei Monti della Farnesina, 77, 00135 Roma</b>
<b><i>Light Lunch (11.30-13.00)</i></b>
<b><i>Welcome and introduction (13.00-13.15)</i></b>
<b>Participants:</b> Executive Board Members
<b><i>Networking Activities (13.15-13.30)</i></b>
<b>Getting to know each other and focusing hopes for the retreat</b>
<b>Participants:</b> Executive Board Members
<b><i>Strategic Dialogue 1 (13.30-14.00)</i></b>
<b>A changing external environment and its potential impact on IFAD's implementation of IFAD12 – Part 1</b>
<b>Objective:</b> Contributes to RO1
<b>Participants:</b> Executive Board Members
<b><i>Plenary Presentation (14.00-14.45)</i></b>
<b>Presentation by IFAD's Director of the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE)</b>
<b>A changing external environment and its potential impact on IFAD's implementation of IFAD12</b>
<b>Participants:</b> Executive Board Members, IOE Director
<b><i>14.45-15.30</i></b>
<b>A changing external environment and its potential impact on IFAD's implementation of IFAD12 – Part 2</b>
<b>Participants:</b> Executive Board Members
<b><i>Break (15.30-15.50) The President and Executive Management Committee joins.</i></b>
<b><i>Welcome to the President and Executive Management Committee and Summary of the Morning Sessions (15.50-16.05)</i></b>
<b><i>Strategic Dialogue 2 (16.05-17.30)</i></b>
<b>Mapping the potential impact of short and long-term crises like the war in Ukraine and climate change on IFAD's ability to deliver on its strategy and to react</b>
<b>Objective:</b> Contributes to RO2
Considering the short and long-term crises like the war in Ukraine and climate change;
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the potential impact of these crises on IFAD's ability to deliver on its strategy and to react?</li> <li>2. What should be prioritized for action, considering the level of impact?</li> </ol>
<b>Participants:</b> Executive Board Members, Executive Management Committee Members

<b>Day two, Friday 29 April</b>
<b>Officine Farneto - Via dei Monti della Farnesina, 77, 00135 Roma RM</b>
<b>Light Lunch (11.30-13.00)</b>
<b>Agenda Day 2 &amp; Quick review of the outcomes of Day 1 (13.00-13.10)</b>
<b>Strategic Dialogue 3 – (13.10-15.00)</b>
<p><b>Increasing the common understanding of IFAD’s direction and priorities, including IFAD’s mandate and positioning within the international financial and development architecture</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How would you describe IFAD’s mandate and positioning within the international financial and development architecture today?</li> <li>2. Considering, IFAD’s direction and priorities including IFAD’s mandate and positioning, what would further increase its impact and effectiveness? What should IFAD do more of and what should IFAD do less of?</li> </ol> <p><b>Objective:</b> Contributes to RO3</p> <p><b>Participants:</b> Executive Board Members, Executive Management Committee Members</p>
<b>Break (15.00-15.20)</b>
<b>Managing the transition towards the new President (15.20-16.30)</b>
<p><b>Collaborating to manage risks</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can Senior Management and the Executive Board collaborate to ensure a smooth transition towards the new President?</li> <li>2. What are the risks of the transition process towards the new President and what can we do to proactively respond to them?</li> </ol> <p><b>Objective:</b> Contributes to RO3</p> <p><b>Participants:</b> Executive Board Members and Executive Management Committee Members</p>
<b>Finding common ground (16.30-17.15)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. What have we found agreement on?</li> <li>4. What needs further exploration to find agreement on?</li> </ol> <p><b>Objective:</b> Contributes to RO3</p> <p><b>Participants:</b> Executive Board Members and Executive Management Committee Members</p>
<b>Closing remarks (17.15-17.30)</b>

**Office of the Secretary of IFAD  
Executive Board retreat  
28 – 29 April 2022**

**Feedback questionnaire**

**(1) Overall, how would you rate the seventh Executive Board retreat?**

- Excellent
- Very good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor
- No opinion

Other (please specify):

**(2) How relevant did you find the information presented at the retreat?**

- Extremely relevant
- Very relevant
- Moderately relevant
- Slightly relevant
- Not at all relevant

If slightly or not at all relevant, please specify why:

**(3) How useful did you find the format of the retreat?**

- Extremely useful
- Very useful
- Moderately useful
- Slightly useful
- Not at all useful

If slightly or not at all useful, please specify why:

**(4) What are the three main take-aways/lessons learned from this Executive Board retreat?**

**(5) What did you like most about the Executive Board retreat?**

**(6) What would you like to see next time at the Executive Board retreat?**

**(7) Any additional comments or suggestions are welcome.**

Thank you for your time and input.



قائمة الوفود في المعتكف السابع للمجلس التنفيذي

**Delegations at the seventh  
Executive Board retreat**

**Délégations aux septièmes  
Journées de réflexion du Conseil  
d'administration**

**Delegaciones en el séptimo retiro  
de la Junta Ejecutiva**

Executive Board-related seminars and events 2022  
Executive Board retreat session  
28-29 April 2022

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