
Closing statement by President Alvaro Lario

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Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

First of all, thank you for your active engagement and frank contributions to our very constructive discussions—both during the Board itself and during the retreat.

I am grateful for all the insights, guidance and strong support for IFAD that you have expressed. I think we are all aligned around the goal of increasing IFAD's impact at a time of multiple global crises. Truly, we can only move forward together. And there was strong evidence of this unity.

In our dialogue yesterday on fragility and IFAD's role in promoting rural livelihoods, I appreciated that so many members expressed their belief that IFAD has a key role to play. Also, you embraced our goal of stepping up IFAD's work in this area, while raising valid issues that we will need to consider.

I am not going to attempt to list all the points that were made in this valuable and rich discussion. Only to say that while a number of issues were flagged – including the definition of fragile situations, the higher costs that need to be managed, security considerations, and the need to have a flexible approach and explore partnerships with non-state actors – I think we all felt confident that together we can chart our way forward.

I would like to express appreciation for your strong recognition of IFAD's track record and contribution to building the resilience and livelihoods of small-scale producers and other rural people. This is particularly important in fragile situations, where they are even more vulnerable and at risk.

Management has fully taken on board your suggestions for how we can fulfil IFAD's mandate to invest in the poorest and most vulnerable people, and increase our impact and efficiency. Your comments on strengthening the link to peacebuilding and anticipatory action are also timely and fully in line with IFAD's current direction.

Your approval of decisions on loan pricing and the Integrated Borrowing Framework are appreciated, as we continue to refine and optimize our financial model.

Thank you also for your comments and positive responses to the revised Targeting Policy. This overarching policy will guide the organization's future approach and our development of specific guidance and action plans. Your detailed inputs and approval are much appreciated.

We agreed that decentralization is not an end in itself but a tool for increasing IFAD's impact on the ground. We also agreed on recalibration, and shared a willingness to face key questions, trade-offs, and even tough choices. We also heard your request for greater clarity in monitoring, analysis and updates on the progress and results of decentralization.

As I said during our discussion, we can recalibrate our approach while also continuing to move ahead because decentralization is essential for the institution to deliver on its mandate. Goals like getting closer to our clients, helping countries achieve their development objectives and building greater partnerships all require being present on the ground.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the Staff Association for its statement. Management is continuously committed to ongoing constructive engagement to address the issues raised. As you know, improving workplace culture is one of the top three priorities of my presidency, alongside IFAD13 and IFAD12 delivery.

As we conclude the first Executive Board session of 2023, and on behalf of IFAD, I would like to express our gratitude for your unwavering support in these discussions. As we work to bring IFAD's replenishment process to a successful conclusion this year, we count on your engagement as the most critical factor in achieving our shared aspirations.

Allow me to express my gratitude to some representatives who are here with us today. I understand this is their last Board session.

Ms Gloria Wiseman from Canada has been an Executive Board representative since 2019, and a Convenor between 2020 and 2022. She has participated in numerous Governing Council sessions, replenishment sessions, PBAS Working Group meetings and Executive Board informal seminars. She also joined the Executive Board country visit to Sierra Leone last year. Her constructive contributions will surely be missed.

Ms Jette Michelsen from the Kingdom of Denmark has been participating in IFAD's governing body meetings since 2019, including representing Denmark as Alternate Governor. Like Gloria, she has participated in numerous Governing Council sessions, replenishment sessions and Executive Board informal seminars, and I wish to thank her for her dedication.

Ms Bjørg Skotnes from the Kingdom of Norway has been an Executive Board representative since 2020, and a Convenor between 2021 and 2023. Bjørg has participated also in several Governing Council sessions, replenishment sessions and Executive Board informal seminars, and we got to work with her in fully virtual mode during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last but not least, I also understand that it is Ambassador Pio Wennubst's last session. Ambassador Wennubst has participated in IFAD's governing body meetings since 2007, including representing Switzerland on the Executive Board and as an Evaluation Committee member. His contribution to our deliberations has been key and much appreciated.

I am sure I speak on behalf of all of us here in wishing you all the very best for your future endeavours and I would like to have a round of applause for your dedicated work.

I am also pleased to announce to the Board the appointment of Ms Berkis Patricia Perez, a Dominican national, as our new Chief of the Ethics Office.

Let me take this opportunity to sincerely thank Sylvie Martin, who has been leading the Ethics Office since 1 January 2018, after a tenure of more than 15 years in the Office of the General Counsel. I wish her all the best in her retirement.

I also would like to publicly extend my appreciation to Katie Meighan for her Financial Operations Department leadership since September throughout a very challenging period.

And, last but not least, my deep thanks to Deirdre Mc Grenra for doing a stellar job as IFAD's acting Secretary.

Please join me in another round of applause to thank them for their service.

Finally, I would like to recognize the many staff members who made this Executive Board session a success, including all of you behind the scenes - the Secretariat and Communications teams, messengers, interpreters, technicians, ICT staff, Security and caterers. Thank you all very much.

Thank you. I wish you a very good evening. Meeting adjourned.