



Investing in rural people

Executive Board

141st Session

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Opening statement by President Alvaro Lario

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Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the 141st session of IFAD's Executive Board.

Let me start by extending a special welcome to the representatives for Finland, Peru and the United Republic of Tanzania as the new alternate members of the Board.

I also welcome the newly accredited representatives to our Executive Board:

- For Angola: Ambassador Maria de Fátima Monteiro Jardim;
- For Denmark: Ms Lisbeth Jespersen;
- For Egypt: Mr Mina Rizk;
- For Finland: Ms Tanja Grén;
- For Peru: Ambassador Julio Eduardo Martinetti Macedo, who is represented here today by Mr Gustavo Mostajo Ocola;
- For Tanzania: Ambassador Mahmoud Thabit Kombo. Tanzania is represented today by Ms Jacqueline Boniface Mbuya, who is attending her first Executive Board session.

Let me also thank the outgoing members of the Board – the representatives of Côte d'Ivoire – His Excellency Seydou Cissé; of the Dominican Republic – His Excellency Mario Arvelo; and of Ireland – Her Excellency Michelle Winthrop – for their valuable support and engagement.

There have also been changes in the List convenorships. Mr Jan Bade of the Netherlands takes on the role of List A Co-Convenor.

A special thanks to our former Co-Convenor of List A and Convenor of List B: Mr Mitsuaki Shindo of Japan and Ambassador Haifa Aissami Madah of Venezuela, for all their guidance.

It was a pleasure to engage with so many of you yesterday – both new and seasoned – at the annual informal meeting.

Welcome also to our silent observers from the Rome-based agencies, the European Union and all other delegates following our proceedings remotely or from the *salle d'écoute*.

Distinguished representatives,

Before we start our official business, I would like to make a few opening remarks.

It is tempting to speak to you today exclusively about our problems. About the lack of progress we have made – and the uphill struggle to meet our obligations on SDG 2.

We cannot take a moment for granted: the 600 million people predicted to be chronically malnourished by 2030 on current trajectories demand and deserve our best efforts.

But we also gather here today at a time of unprecedented hope – hope driven by technological progress, by transformative progress in many areas of development, and by the growing political consensus around climate change.

With so many competing demands, the global community must not lose sight of its most important goals and promises. The horrific suffering in Ukraine and Gaza are at the top of the news, but at this moment, there are 26 other conflict hotspots around the world. Together, these threaten the lives of more than a quarter of the planet's people.

For IFAD this has a special significance. Currently, half the world's poor rural people live in fragile and conflict-affected countries. By the time our test scores on the SDGs are marked, this is expected to rise to two thirds.

Clearly, there is a growing and urgent need to invest in longer-term solutions to poverty and hunger, and to ensure global stability.

Dear friends,

There is still time to deliver on the SDGs, but it is going to take renewed focus and a huge push by all of us, together.

IFAD fosters resilience in anticipation of a more challenging future, but always in hope of a better one.

This is our core business.

We know that building resilience also helps address long-term factors that can produce conflict. Especially conflicts fuelled by tension over the use of land, water and other natural resources.

This is why, with your support, fragility has been agreed as one of three key focus areas in our upcoming programme of work.

Addressing institutional, social and environmental fragility will be mainstreamed into projects at all levels, including design, implementation, partnerships, and monitoring and evaluation.

The other two focus areas – private sector engagement and climate and biodiversity – will also complement our work in fragile situations.

In March, we joined forces with the World Food Programme on an action plan to strengthen our collaboration in fragile situations.

IFAD brings 45 years of experience to this partnership. 45 years of collaborating with rural people and their organizations to pioneer solutions that work.

45 years of investing in the tools rural people need to withstand crisis, even in the most fragile conditions and remote locations.

In Haiti, for example, despite current political and security challenges, IFAD is still supporting projects that reach around 600,000 people, ensuring local access to goods and services through a network of local partners.

In a fluid situation like the one in Haiti, when crisis strikes, locally produced food can be a lifeline – especially if roads are blocked or destroyed and markets closed.

One of IFAD's comparative advantages is its size. Even after our recent reforms, we remain relatively small. This allows us to be innovative and to pilot cutting-edge solutions to hunger and poverty that larger organizations cannot. It means we can act fast and deliver.

We also understand the importance of scale. Sometimes small interventions – like intercropping – have the biggest impact. And other times the situation requires investing in cutting edge technology, like chatbots that can answer farmers' questions on pest control, market prices and weather forecasts.

I saw this for myself recently in the Solomon Islands, where I met communities that had been transformed through innovative and ambitious investments, that were tailored to local needs.

They were not just projects designed to build local resilience in a vacuum - but in a way these communities needed: developing good jobs for young people so they had reasons to stay on the land; investing in local, sustainable crops and businesses; and bringing women into decision making processes.

I am proud of our dynamism and nimbleness, but we all know that IFAD is not as small as it once was. And after years of reform and growth, it is time to recalibrate and retune for a new era that demands more in terms of effectiveness and efficiency.

What I am proposing is not a total overhaul – it is a fine-tuning to ensure that operations and delivery are at the heart of everything we do. And to refocus on the essence of what has made IFAD unique, on what has enabled us to deliver results where no others could.

As discussed in the retreat, the new evolved IFAD structure will have a stronger focus on operations and delivery, development effectiveness and private sector engagement. I hope we can all agree, that paints a picture of an organization better suited to the challenges we are facing.

I want to also take a brief moment in the context of organizational changes to acknowledge the departure of three directors who are leaving IFAD, or have recently just left: Bambis Constantinides, who has been the Director of the Office of Audit and Oversight since 2005; Ruth Farrant, Director of the Financial Management Services Division; and Thouraya Triki, Director of the Sustainable Production, Markets and Institutions Division.

I'm extremely grateful to their years of dedication to our mission and wish them all the best in their new endeavours.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me update you quickly also on the IFAD13 replenishment.

We have received pledges from 77 Member States, including 3 additional climate contributions (ACCs) and 1 concessional partner loan (CPL). Core contributions stand at US\$1.3 billion. CPLs and ACCs bring the current total to US\$1.35 billion. We are continuing to work towards our ambition of US\$2 billion and are hopeful for more core pledges, ACCs and CPLs.

I would like to encourage all Executive Board members who have still not pledged to announce their pledges as soon as possible, and for those who are considering ACCs, CPLs or potential top-ups to their current pledges to work to get those decisions approved well before the end of this year, if possible.

As you know, when we meet at the September Board, we will need to finalize the size of the IFAD13 programme of loans and grants – which will be based on pledges received.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As our Board you understand this: a pledge to IFAD is a pledge to build resilience with some of the most marginalized people in some of the world's poorest countries.

To support IFAD is to support the young people in these areas, so they can hope for good jobs and meet their potential.

And above all, to invest in IFAD is to invest in the children of rural communities, so they can still have the chance to inherit an earth that can sustain them.

IFAD is uniquely placed to drive transformative and sustainable interventions that can be scaled up to deliver on all these opportunities.

With this, IFAD Management is committed to active dialogue with Member States, as I hope you saw at our informal meeting. I expect this to continue through this Executive Board session and look forward to hearing your views on advancing our work together.

Thank you.