
Closing statement by President Alvaro Lario

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Distinguished delegates and colleagues,

As we conclude the 145th session of our Executive Board, let me start by thanking you for the rich discussions, and the commitment to IFAD's mandate. At this moment in time, it has been great to see how Member States have come together in terms of providing clear direction to Management.

Your engagement over the past two days, from the strategic discussion on digitalization to the conversations on the upcoming programme of work, engaging with the private sector, and extending impact and resilience, have been very productive. It will help us, as Management, to shape the IFAD14 strategic offer leading into the upcoming IFAD14 Consultation.

I was very happy to see the support and different points of view on the strategic discussion on digitalization. It was encouraging to recognize the enormous promise that digital technology has to make agriculture more efficient and remunerative for the farmers IFAD works with. These discussions will also shape our approach as we work with Member States and private sector partners to make digital technology accessible and affordable for the farmers who need it most – but can least afford it.

Digitalization is a tool to enhance IFAD's impact in areas where we bring clear comparative advantage. Our focus will be on depth, as I was mentioning, rather than breadth, ensuring that systems reach the first mile and contribute to closing the digital divide.

This approach will require us to be creative in forging new partnerships – as we were discussing now – and to be thoughtful about the risks we take, always within the boundaries of our mandate. We will continue strengthening how we capture evidence and integrate lessons into our operations, so that digital solutions are also scalable and sustainable.

Let me thank you for the guidance on the way forward on the Strategic Framework – this discussion, as agreed, will be postponed until the Fourteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources, when it will be re-discussed by the Executive Board.

It was also encouraging to see the broad endorsement of IFAD's proposal for a nexus approach to the interconnected challenges of climate, environment and biodiversity, and the widespread support for scaling up resilient and sustainable agricultural practices. I look forward to seeing the strategy approved at the December Board so that we can move forward into implementation.

During our discussion of the high-level preview of IFAD's 2026 programme of work and regular budget, we heard your call to engage more strongly with the private sector, while ensuring robust due diligence processes when engaging with private sector actors.

Let me assure you that IFAD intends to maintain a zero-growth budget at this time of economic constraints. This does not come without prudent fiscal discipline and sacrifices, both of which IFAD and its staff are exercising diligently. However, we must also recognize that the concessional loan model differs from that of other specialized United Nations organizations and agencies. This makes joint efforts more complex and means that, in some cases, coordination with the Rome-based agencies and other United Nations agencies or expanding decentralization can actually raise costs rather than reduce them. It is important to underscore that innovations sometimes lead to additional costs. Hence, our choices are selective and intentional to ensure that we remain within our budget. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD also thanks you for and appreciates your comments on this proposal.

In this context, the Board's steadfast support for prioritizing fragile situations and strengthening South-South and Triangular Cooperation is a testament to Member States'

determination to ensure that IFAD can continue to fulfil its mandate to reduce extreme poverty and hunger.

IFAD is working to streamline and sharpen its priorities and to ensure greater coherence across the institution while keeping in mind its particular business model. Our focus remains on planning and effectiveness so that resources deliver the greatest possible impact, making the best use of our talent, and ensuring that more decisions are taken closer to the ground, where they matter most for rural people.

On the non-sovereign operations, I am grateful for your approval of the new strategy. The strategy is realistic, the niche is clear, and the value we bring to rural people is evident. This is about complementing our sovereign operations, while taking calculated risks and scaling up over time. It will be a gradual journey that requires a cultural shift both internally and externally, and I thank you for accompanying us as we move forward step by step.

We value your feedback and reaffirm IFAD's commitment to mainstreaming nutrition across investments, ensuring efforts remain aligned with IFAD's commitments, and strengthening implementation and accountability to keep nutrition integral to our mission.

Finally, it is important to recognize the collaborative relationship between Management and IOE and mention the importance the September Executive Board has for the Board's oversight of IFAD's work on the ground as well its efficiency, impact and effectiveness. The release of the ARIE, RIDE and RIME reports and, on this occasion, the IFAD12 Impact Assessment Report represents a moment for us to take stock of IFAD's achievements while also noting where we can improve.

Before closing I would like to take a moment to recognize the contributions of Ms Erma Rheindrayani of Indonesia who will be leaving our Board. Ms Rheindrayani has participated actively in numerous governing body meetings since early 2023 and has acted most recently as the List B Convenor. I thank her for her consistent support and commitment and wish her every success in the future.

Distinguished delegates and dear colleagues,

Our ongoing investments in rural transformation and contribution to the development of strong rural economies and communities would not be possible without your contributions.

Thank you for your trust, your support and the recognition of IFAD's critical role in these challenging times. IFAD is going into its Fourteenth Replenishment well positioned to deliver strong and impactful results for the rural women and men we serve. We are looking forward to the Governing Council's approval of Marie Haga as an experienced and seasoned External Chair who knows IFAD, its Membership and the challenges that lie ahead.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Board members for these productive two days. My thanks, also, to all the interpreters and the entire team for making this session successful. Thank you to all IFAD staff for their incredible commitment to this institution and its mandate.

Thank you all, and safe travels.

Thank you for your attention.