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## **Report of the proceedings of the 2025 Annual Informal Meeting of the Executive Board**

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### **FOR: INFORMATION**

**Action:** The Executive Board is invited to take note of the report of the proceedings of the 2025 Annual Informal Meeting of the Executive Board, as contained herein.

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# Report of the proceedings of the 2025 Annual Informal Meeting of the Executive Board

## I. Background

1. The 2025 Annual Informal Meeting (AIM) of the Executive Board was held on Monday and Tuesday, 12 and 13 May, at Hotel Castel Vecchio in Castel Gandolfo (Rome). Participation was limited to a single representative from each Member State on the Board, together with the List and sub-List Convenors. The first day emphasized fostering connections and exchanging perspectives among Executive Board members, while the second day concentrated on strengthening relationships, aligning strategic priorities and the collaborative shaping of IFAD's future by Board representatives and Management.

### A. Preparation

2. In preparation for the 2025 AIM, the Office of the Secretary had arranged a series of interviews to gather insights from List Convenors, and co-Convenors, the Chairs of the Audit Committee and Evaluation Committee, in addition to members of IFAD's Executive Management Committee. These interviews, conducted by the meeting facilitator, Giuseppe Totino and the Secretary of IFAD, Claudia ten Have, captured an array of priorities and perspectives. The interviews revealed that the AIM was seen as a vital opportunity for Executive Board representatives to engage in open dialogue and enhance collective understanding of IFAD's future direction. Based on the interview discussions, the AIM working agenda was prepared by the Facilitator and the Secretary and is presented in appendix I. Appendix II lists the meeting participants, while appendix III details the IFAD staff members who attended.

## II. Programme summary

### A. Day 1

#### **Conversation one: Strengthening our ties, sharing our perspectives, strengthening IFAD**

3. The 2025 AIM opened with welcoming remarks by the Convenors and the Secretary of IFAD. The Secretary described the purpose of the AIM and the planned schedule for the two days. Emphasizing the collaborative and inclusive nature of the AIM, the Facilitator presented the five working assumptions underpinning the programme: (i) everyone has wisdom; (ii) everyone's wisdom is needed for the best result; (iii) there are no wrong answers; (iv) the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; and (v) everyone will hear others and everyone will be heard.
4. The Facilitator opened the morning session by introducing two activities: (i) silent constellations and (ii) pair conversations. These icebreakers encouraged participants to connect with one another while reflecting on their career journeys, their engagement with IFAD and the inspiring leaders who had influenced their own leadership identities. The morning activities established an enthusiastic, collaborative atmosphere for the meeting.
5. The first strategic conversation of the AIM centred on the pivotal importance of the Board's effectiveness in advancing IFAD's mission. The format was interactive, with representatives initially circulating around the room and sharing their individual responses at seven designated stations, each featuring statements related to the Board's effectiveness. Following this, they were organized into smaller groups, each assigned to a station for an in-depth discussion. Spokespersons from each group subsequently shared key insights and conclusions. This dialogue provided an open platform to reflect on the Board's collective functioning, examine the dynamics that underpinned its effectiveness, and identify strategies to enhance collaboration for greater impact.

6. The results of the station discussions are included in appendix IV.

**Conversation two: Evaluation as a catalyst: Insights from evidence for accountability**

7. As per standard practice, the AIM featured a specific session between Executive Board representatives and Indran Naidoo, Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE), who made a presentation highlighting the fundamental role of independent evaluation in enhancing the performance, transparency and strategic alignment of IFAD.
8. The [presentation](#) outlined key areas of progress and strategic focus:
- Expanded outreach in 2024, with IOE organizing or participating in over 35 events, conducting evaluations in 26 countries and publishing 40 reports;
  - Ongoing commitment to communication, knowledge-sharing and global collaboration, aimed at enhancing the quality and impact of evaluations;
  - Broadened geographic coverage, responding to growing demand from both the Board and Management;
  - Strengthened accountability, through lesson-sharing and a focus on country strategy and programme evaluations, which generate actionable insights;
  - Constructive, sustained engagement with Management, ensuring recommendations are understood and addressed; and
  - Improved internal efficiency, reducing time and costs while maintaining meaningful stakeholder engagement.
9. The subsequent discussion underscored the need to prioritize country-level evaluations while maintaining a balanced focus on both accountability and learning. Participants highlighted the importance of systematically incorporating lessons learned into the Fourteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources (IFAD14). Notable progress had been made in ensuring that evaluations were more participatory and learning-focused. This had been achieved through expanded stakeholder engagement and leveraging emerging AI technologies to extract valuable thematic insights.

**Conversation three: From learning to action: How the new ODE supports IFAD's mission and impact in a changing context**

10. This year's AIM featured a new session focused on how the Office of Development Effectiveness (ODE) will support IFAD's mission in a shifting global landscape. The session included a presentation by Carola Alvarez, Managing Director, ODE.
11. The Managing Director's [presentation](#) outlined ODE's structure, purpose and strategic role in strengthening the impact and quality of IFAD-supported initiatives. It emphasized how ODE systematically integrates project design, implementation, self-evaluation, innovation and best practices to improve effectiveness and foster organizational learning.
12. The presentation emphasized the critical role of impact assessments in demonstrating attributable results and guiding future project design through lessons learned. Additionally, the strong collaboration between ODE and IOE was highlighted as essential for ensuring complementarity, enhancing efficiency and preventing duplication in evaluation efforts. ODE also outlined its forward-looking priorities, including expanding impact assessments into new thematic areas, strengthening the tracking of long-term outcomes, and increasing the practical use of evaluations to support learning, strategic planning and informed decision-making.
13. A rich round of questions and dialogue followed the presentation. The discussion highlighted the importance of a transparent and collaborative approach to selecting

evaluation subjects, emphasizing continuous learning alongside accountability. Participants valued the ongoing refinement of the IFAD12 Impact Assessment, including improved sampling and methodology, and appreciated the sharing of disaggregated data for deeper insights.

**Conversation four: Multiple views, one purpose: Talking with each other, not across each other**

14. The concluding session of the day, held solely among representatives, focused on key themes emerging from the preparatory interviews. The session offered a valuable opportunity for in-depth discussion and exchange of views. The following six questions were displayed at different tables around the room, allowing participants to choose their preferred topic for dialogue and contribution:
  - (1) **Upper-middle-income countries (UMICs):** How can IFAD continue to be relevant in UMICs, when 100 per cent of core resources are allocated to low-income and lower-middle-income countries?
  - (2) **Fragile contexts:** Working in fragile contexts poses considerable challenges. How can IFAD ensure the impact and sustainability of its operations in such contexts?
  - (3) **Trade-offs:** In the current global landscape, the general call is to do more with less. What guidance would you give Management vis-à-vis “acceptable” trade-offs to ensure IFAD’s efficiency, effectiveness and continued impact on rural development without jeopardizing its financial sustainability?
  - (4) **Comparative advantage:** As Board members, what do you think is IFAD’s comparative advantage?
  - (5) **Debt vulnerability:** Debt distress is growing, official development assistance (ODA) is shrinking and zero-real-growth budgets are an expectation. How can the sustainability of IFAD’s operations be ensured in debt-vulnerable Member States?
  - (6) **Executive Board effectiveness:** Informal dialogue among Board members, including with Convenors and Friends, during informal seminars, regional dialogues and List meetings are key to consensus-building – how can these be made even more effective?
15. The session fostered a productive discussion, highlighting the vital role that **UMICs** could play in project design, knowledge-sharing, financial contributions and private sector engagement, while also supporting implementation and evaluation. In **fragile contexts**, a conflict-sensitive, partnership-driven approach was emphasized as essential; in particular, the need to strike a balance between impartiality, a nuanced understanding of social dynamics and transparent communication about emerging risks. The importance of carefully managing **trade-offs** was also underscored, particularly the need to balance risk-taking with financial stability, especially in fragile environments where returns may be lower.
16. IFAD’s **comparative advantage** and unique strengths were reaffirmed, notably its ability to effectively collaborate with smallholders and rural communities to build trust, and its distinctive role in uniting partners and financial resources at the country level. Regarding the **effectiveness of the Executive Board**, participants emphasized the need for improved communication and engagement not only among Board members but also across the entire Membership. The importance of informal seminars, consultations and regional dialogues in enhancing the Board’s effectiveness and fostering greater inclusiveness was also recognized.
17. The session wrapped up with each representative offering a single word to capture their experience of the first day. Their responses ranged from “collegial” and “enriching” to “insightful” and “inspiring”, reflecting a shared sense of engagement and positivity.

18. The session concluded at 6 p.m. Convenors met briefly with the Secretary to prepare a summary of the day's proceedings to share with Senior Management the following morning.
19. Meeting participants gathered with Senior Management for a guided tour of the historic city of Castel Gandolfo, followed by an aperitif and dinner.

## **B. Day 2**

### **Conversation five: Looking forward together: A Conversation with the President**

20. The morning commenced with the Convenors welcoming the President and Senior Management. A concise recap followed of key highlights and discussion themes from the previous day.
21. The President of IFAD, Alvaro Lario, opened the annual Conversation with the President by recognizing the AIM as a vital platform for Executive Board representatives and Management to align on core priorities, foster a shared understanding of Management's perspectives, and shape the institution's strategic vision for the future. He then elaborated on several key areas:
  - Despite the growing instability in the global context and the resulting challenges for governments and official development assistance, IFAD remains steadfast in its commitment to its mission, core principles and values;
  - IFAD has a resilient financial model distinct from that of other United Nations agencies, with stable pricing and borrowing mechanisms offering greater flexibility. Moreover, predictable, concessional financing is more critical than ever as economic uncertainty and a sharp decline in investments are driving a surge in demand for financing under the Borrowed Resource Access Mechanism (BRAM), with governments eager to leverage every available dollar;
  - Shocks will persist, underscoring the ongoing need to strengthen resilience – an area where IFAD plays a crucial role. Developing and implementing resilience mechanisms for the most vulnerable populations remains essential to ensure their ability to withstand and recover from future crises;
  - Strengthening collaboration with development finance institutions, public development banks and national agencies was increasingly crucial. Deepening these partnerships will unlock additional resources and expertise and enhance development impact. Such alliances are essential for tackling complex challenges, driving innovation and ensuring sustainable progress;
  - In light of the broader United Nations reforms and the UN80 Initiative, IFAD is aligning with efforts to concentrate on results, focusing on programmatic outcomes and cost-effectiveness without compromising its development mandate. Seven clusters had been established to guide the UN80 process, and IFAD will actively participate in both the development and the specialized agencies clusters to ensure effective collaboration and aligned priorities.
22. The President then opened the floor for questions. The following issues were raised by Executive Board representatives:
  - IFAD should prioritize its core mission, demonstrating development impact, upholding values, and ensuring that both core resources and borrowing are aligned to effectively support sustainable progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda;
  - In today's global context, safeguarding IFAD's credit rating, exploring opportunities to expand concessional lending – such as through the Private Sector Financing Programme – and enhancing strategic partnerships,

including with other international financial institutions, are key to attaining IFAD's goals;

- Prioritization is crucial for IFAD to deliver high-impact investments that advance sustainable development, with a particular emphasis on adopting a more focused and cohesive approach to addressing systemic imbalances;
  - IFAD must continue to communicate effectively about its impact on the poorest rural populations and its role in fostering resilient, sustainable change. A clear, transparent narrative about its capabilities and limitations is essential for building trust, managing expectations and maximizing impact;
  - Building and maintaining trust through continuous dialogue and proactive consultation with members is imperative for fostering collaboration and identifying effective pathways to achieve shared progress.
23. The President emphasized that discipline, effective execution and a strong organizational culture were fundamental to IFAD's success. Looking ahead, he noted that it would continue to be essential to clearly demonstrate IFAD's impact and added value, while also supporting members in understanding its relevance and well-defined mission. Additionally, continuing to improve system efficiency, harnessing private sector involvement and digitalization would be key priorities for IFAD14.

#### **Conversation six: Positioning IFAD for the future: Strategy and agility in operations**

24. The second session on day 2 provided a valuable opportunity to delve deeper into two strategically important areas for IFAD's future: the operational agility initiative and the newly established Private Sector Operations Division.
25. Gérardine Mukeshimana, Vice-President of IFAD, was invited to present the operational agility initiative. The [presentation](#) emphasized the initiative's overall focus on enhancing the speed, quality and impact of IFAD's operations, with the overarching goal of delivering better results more efficiently by streamlining workflows, minimizing redundancies, maximizing synergies across financial products and improving coordination.
26. Key actions of the initiative included:
- Review the design, quality assurance and approval processes to identify bottlenecks, optimize staff time and strengthen quality enhancement mechanisms;
  - Strengthen Management oversight of private sector operations and ensure complementarity across diverse product portfolios;
  - Facilitate early planning with medium-term workplans aligned to strategic priorities, simplify budgeting and improve workforce planning to attract and retain essential expertise aligned with current and future strategic needs.
27. Jenny Scharrer, Director, Private Sector Operations Division, was invited to present the division's plan and approach for moving forward. The [presentation](#) highlighted IFAD's strategy to bridge the agricultural financing gap by focusing on high-impact investments that were often overlooked by banks and traditional impact investors. Key elements of the presentation included:
- Focus on non-sovereign operations, such as private agribusinesses, cooperatives and social enterprises that are financially viable but lack access to commercial capital;
  - Prioritize support for smallholder farmers and projects that align with IFAD's country strategies;

- Utilize a range of financial instruments – including senior and subordinated loans, and equity – to build a diverse portfolio comprising financial institutions, impact funds and catalytic investments;
  - Leverage a blended finance model that combines resources from IFAD’s core funds, borrowed capital and donor-backed trust funds (e.g. the Private Sector Trust Fund) to maximize impact.
28. Following each presentation, representatives engaged in a plenary-style question-and-answer session with the speakers. The discussion encouraged open and interactive dialogue, which shed light on several operational challenges and opportunities within IFAD’s non-sovereign operations, as well as the mitigation measures currently being implemented to address them. The session also provided an opportunity to further explore the current proposals under the operational agility initiative and their potential impact on IFAD’s overall effectiveness.

### **Conversation seven: Strengthening IFAD’s concessional business model through capital optimization**

29. The final session of the day featured a joint [presentation](#) by Hernán Alvarado, the then Associate Vice-President, Financial Operations Department (FOD) and Carola Alvarez, Managing Director, ODE. The presentation focused on strengthening IFAD’s concessional business model to better address evolving development needs. It outlined a strategy to optimize IFAD’s capital by reassessing its leverage ratio and enhancing the efficiency of Member State contributions.
30. Following the presentation, three stations were set up, each featuring a guiding question. Members were invited to join the station of their choice for a focused discussion, with each session facilitated by a member of IFAD Management. The discussions centred around the following key questions:
- (1) How important is capital optimization in today’s ODA landscape and how will it really support IFAD’s development objectives? *(Led by Associate Vice-President, FOD)*
  - (2) Would there be a reduction in IFAD14 impact if core resources decreased? If so, how would capital optimization help? *(Led by Managing Director, ODE)*
  - (3) Which safeguards do we need to effectively control the risk that comes with increased leverage? *(Led by Roger Fischer, Director and Chief Risk Officer, Office of Enterprise Risk Management)*
31. The session concluded with each group leader presenting one to two key highlights. Representatives emphasized that capital optimization was vital for expanding borrowing capacity and improving resource efficiency. Key points were raised regarding resource allocation across income groups, risk management, mission alignment, capacity limitations and the need to maintain a strong project pipeline. The discussion highlighted the importance of IFAD clearly defining its risk appetite, setting liquidity thresholds and assessing cost-effectiveness.
32. Following the presentation of the highlights, members were invited to share their perspectives on engaging in further dialogue and consultations regarding the adjustment of the leverage ratio. The majority expressed their support for progressing with these discussions.
33. As next steps, Management indicated that the Capital Adequacy Policy would be revised. Additionally, engagement with rating agencies would be prioritized to gather their perspectives and feedback.

### **Closing reflections**

34. As the session drew to an end, representatives were asked to reflect on the following question: What is on your mind for the upcoming Board, and what should the Board prioritize over the coming year? Representatives highlighted the

importance of utilizing Board time effectively to focus on critical issues such as risk appetite, financial strategy and replenishment planning. Moreover, conducting inclusive and transparent consultations, along with timely information-sharing to facilitate well-informed decision-making, was emphasized. Representatives also advocated for cross-List collaboration, strategic prioritization and a focus on practical strategies that empower rural communities.

35. In closing, the Secretary highlighted that this year's meeting was a special milestone as it was the tenth anniversary of the AIM. She expressed her gratitude to the Convenors, Board representatives, the IFAD President and Management, the Facilitator and her colleagues in the Office of the Secretary for their trust, candour and active engagement throughout the productive two days.



## IFAD Executive Board Annual Informal Meeting

12-13 May 2025, Castel Gandolfo

### **Purpose: Strengthening Ties, Shaping Future**

The 2025 Annual Informal Meeting (AIM) brings together IFAD's Executive Board Representatives and Management in a dedicated informal environment to strengthen ties, deepen collaboration, and position IFAD for a resilient, impactful future.

The informal meeting aims to:

- **Foster open, direct dialogue** on the strategic issues shaping IFAD's next chapter;
- **Build stronger relationships across Lists and with Management**, cultivating ties as the foundation for addressing complexity together;
- **Continue strong governance and oversight practices**, reflecting thoughtfully on how interaction, feedback, and evidence can sharpen effectiveness;
- **Engage with insights from independent evaluation and on development effectiveness**, exploring how evidence, learning, and accountability can drive greater strategic focus and portfolio impact;
- **Deepen shared understanding of IFAD's evolving financial strategy and initiatives like capital optimization**, recognizing their importance for IFAD to respond to the current country development challenges through rural investments;
- **Align around key strategic priorities for 2025 and beyond**, with a special focus on preparing collaboratively for successful 2025 EB sessions and securing IFAD's future leadership in rural development, including through operational agility.

## Programme

### Day 1: Building Ties, Sharing Perspectives

Executive Board Representatives

Time	Session Title
<sup>1</sup> 10.30 – 11.00	<b>Welcome and Setting the Tone</b>
11.00 – 13.00	<b>Conversation 1: Strengthening our Ties, Sharing our Perspectives, Strengthening IFAD</b>
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.00	<b>Conversation 2: Evaluation as a Catalyst: Insights from Evidence for Accountability</b> with IOE Director
15.00 – 16.00	<b>Conversation 3: From Learning to Action: How the new ODE supports IFAD's Mission and Impact in a Changing Context</b> with ODE Director
16.00 – 16.30	Refresher Break
16.30 – 17.45	<b>Conversation 4: Multiple Views, One Purpose: Talking with Each Other, not Across Each Other</b>
17:45 -18.00 <sup>2</sup>	<b>Reflections, Insights and Recommendations for Day 2</b>
19.30	<b>Informal Aperitivo and Dinner</b> with IFAD Senior Management

<sup>1</sup> Departure from IFAD to Hotel Castel Vecchio, Castel Gandolfo at 9.00. Welcome coffee from 10:00.

<sup>2</sup> 18.00 – 19.30 for check-in and free time.

**Programme cont.****Day 2: Deepening Ties, Aligning Strategy, Shaping Future**

Executive Board Representatives and IFAD Management

Time	Session Title
9.00 – 9.30	<b>Opening, Introductions and Connections</b> <b>Reflections from Day 1</b>
9.30 – 10.30	<b>Conversation 5: Looking Forward Together: A Conversation with the President</b>
10.30 – 11.00	Refresher Break
11.00 – 12.30	<b>Conversation 6: Positioning IFAD for the Future: Strategy and Agility in Operations</b>
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.30	<b>Conversation 7: Strengthening IFAD's Financial Foundations: Capital Optimization for Strategic Resilience</b>
15.30 – 16.00 <sup>3</sup>	<b>Closing Reflections</b>

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<sup>3</sup> Departure to Rome at 16.20.



Investing in rural people  
Investir dans les populations rurales  
Invertir en la población rural  
الاستثمار في السكان الريفيين

**قائمة الوفود في الاجتماع السنوي غير الرسمي  
للمجلس التنفيذي لعام 2025**

**Delegations at the 2025 Annual  
Informal Meeting of the  
Executive Board**

**Délégations à la réunion  
informelle annuelle 2025 du  
Conseil d'administration**

**Delegaciones en la reunión  
oficiosa anual de la  
Junta Ejecutiva de 2025**

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## List of IFAD Staff participants

- The President, Alvaro Lario
- The Vice-President, Gérardine Mukeshimana
- Chief of Staff, Office of the President and Vice-President, Dina Saleh
- Associate Vice-President of the Department for Country Operations, Donal Brown
- Associate Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer, Financial Operations Department, Hernán Alvarado
- Associate Vice-President and Chief Risk Officer, Office of Enterprise Risk Management, Roger Fischer
- Associate Vice-President of the Corporate Services Department, Guoqi Wu
- Associate Vice-President of the External Relations Department, Federica Diamanti
- Managing Director of the Office of Technical Delivery, Pieterneel Boogaard
- Managing Director of the Office of Development Effectiveness, Carola Alvarez
- General Counsel, Katherine Meighan
- Director of the Private Sector Operations Division, Jenny Scharrer
- Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, Indran Naidoo
- Deputy Director, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, Mona Fetouh
- Secretary of IFAD, Claudia ten Have
- Special Advisor to the President, Office of the President and Vice-President, Constanza di Nucci
- Senior Advisor to the President, Office of the President and Vice-President, Andres Uribe Orozco
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- Senior Communication Specialist, Office of the President and Vice-President, Conor O'Loughlin
- Chief, Governance and Membership Services, Office of the Secretary, Deirdre Mc Grenra
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- Conference and Meetings Services Assistant, Office of the Secretary, Flavia Antonelli
- Conference and Meetings Services Associate, Office of the Secretary, Veronica Villegas
- Conference and Meeting Services Assistant, Veronica Battista

## Reflection of Executive Board effectiveness

















