

Closing statement by His Excellency Hans Hoogeveen, Chairperson of the forty-second session of the Governing Council of IFAD

Now we have come to the end of the forty-second session of the Governing Council of IFAD.

We have had two exciting days, with a packed programme. We know that we are lagging behind when it comes to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 2 on zero hunger; hence the need to step up our efforts. In these two days, we have seen promising steps, ideas and commitments, which will help and guide us towards the future.

In his message of hope to the Governing Council, His Holiness Pope Francis highlighted that we live in a society that is capable of winning the battle against hunger and destitution, and that the words "hunger does not have a present or a future, but only a past" must not be a mere slogan but become a reality. He stressed the plight of the rural poor and the need to sustainably and innovatively use our natural resources to overcome poverty and hunger. This message gave us a strong impetus to pursue our work in the future.

We had the pleasure of hosting the President of the Dominican Republic, His Excellency Danilo Medina Sánchez, as well as the Minister for Agriculture of Rwanda, Her Excellency Géraldine Mukeshimana, both conveying the importance of clear commitment at the highest level of government in bringing about sustainable rural transformation. The Prime Minister of Italy, His Excellency Giuseppe Conte, joined the Pope in underlining the important work of the Rome-based agencies and their daily commitment towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a view to achieving zero hunger. He noted that the Rome-based agencies were the global hub for the fight against hunger and for the promotion of sustainable agricultural development.

It was great and exciting to have so many young people participate here in the panel sessions, thus giving us more zeal to pursue the SDGs. It is up to us not only to listen to youth, but give them the chance to lead activities that will enable us to achieve the results we are aiming for; for example, through the investments by the new Agribusiness Capital Fund.

We appreciate the positive signal by Finland, who announced the increased pledge to the Eleventh Replenishment of IFAD's Resources through a concessional partner loan to help finance IFAD's activities.

During the dialogue with the Governors on the financial architecture of IFAD, we reiterated the need to strengthen the financial base of IFAD. We must maintain the focus on IFAD's mandate, and also make full use of other avenues to ensure that adequate resources exist for investing in sustainable rural transformation. It is clear that we have to be optimistic, and at the same time realistic.

The dialogue with the Governors on private sector engagement shows that there is a possibility of working shoulder-to-shoulder in co-investing with private sector institutions. A lot of work still has to be done to finalize a clear Private Sector Strategy for IFAD – because we need the strategy to implement the decisions on business items that we have taken at this Governing Council.

It is also great to see that we are working together to shape a clear vision for the implementation of the United Nations Development System (UNDS) reform. Specifically, we need to map out how to give a stronger role to the three Rome-based agencies – by taking joint initiatives and ensuring positive results on the ground that demonstrate to United Nations headquarters our commitment to deliver on the SDGs, particularly on zero hunger and no poverty. With better coordination, we can achieve better results.

We note and appreciate the leadership of women and youth in transforming our food systems, as expressed by the EAT Foundation and other speakers. We need to ensure that women and youth get equal access to resources.

We tried to be innovative for the programme of this Governing Council by introducing dialogues with Governors – involving them in discussions rather than making general statements in the Plenary as was the case in the past. I would like to thank you all for your engagement in the discussions – you did great!

I would like to give my special thanks to the Governing Council Vice-Chairs, my dear friends Her Excellency Maria Cristina Boldorini, the Governor for Argentina, and the Governor for Indonesia, Mr Andin Hadiyanto.

I would like to thank IFAD President Mr Gilbert Houngbo for his leadership, for his inspiration and for trying to take us further than we think we can go. I think we need his visionary leadership to find the "right" pathway. I would like also to thank the Director-General of FAO, Mr Graziano da Silva, and his staff for making this meeting here at FAO possible. For these two days, it felt like we were at IFAD.

Allow me also to extend special thanks to all the staff of IFAD, the Secretariat team, and all the staff who you have seen doing various things in and around the Plenary such as the Protocol unit, as well as all those persons working behind the scenes. Let us give them a big applause. Special thanks, of course, to all the technicians and the interpreters for helping us with the interpretation and making sure that we understood what all were saying. Thank you so much. A big applause for them.

Finally, I would like to thank you, Governors, participants and all the panellists, for being so active – and for creating not only an atmosphere of hope, but also an atmosphere of positive commitment with new ideas, new access to funding and also your continued support to IFAD, as well as to the collaboration among Rome-based agencies. I hope that this exciting Governing Council will energize our next steps in our pathway to zero hunger in 2030.

I wish you a very safe and pleasant journey back, for those who have travelled. For those who stay in Rome, have a great weekend.

I declare the forty-second session of the IFAD Governing Council adjourned.