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Concluding remarks by the President of IFAD, Mr Gilbert Houngbo at the forty-fourth session of IFAD's Governing Council

Governing Council — Forty-fourth Session
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For: **Information**

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Mr Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Governors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a few minutes our Chair will bring this forty-fourth session of IFAD's Governing Council to a close.

I would like to start by thanking you, Mr Suminto, for your excellent guidance and your patience over the past several months, and by expressing my thanks to our Vice-Chairs, Her Excellency Minister Ananga Messina from Cameroon and Her Excellency Ambassador Sarch from the United Kingdom.

I am sure that you will also want to join me in acknowledging all my colleagues, IFAD staff, as well as your respective teams – who made our first-ever virtual Governing Council a success and a truly engaging event.

Quite frankly, those successes will also, in the coming months, bring us to reflect on the best and most efficient way to organize our Executive Board and Governing Council in the future, even in the post-COVID era. There are a lot of lessons to learn.

As recalled yesterday by the President of Angola and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the challenges to realize the SDGs are greater than ever. They also reminded us that transforming rural areas and investing in rural people are at the very core of the solution. This year's Governing Council session has clearly demonstrated what IFAD stands for, and what we will be standing for in the years to come.

The year 2021 is one with unprecedented opportunities for another series of game-changing moments. You can count on IFAD to help advance our common goals at the United Nations Secretary-General's Food Systems Summit. You can count on your institution to do its best during the COP26, co-chaired by both Italy and United Kingdom, two very active Member States. You can also count on us during 2021 to work together with our Governor from Italy to try our best to capitalize on the G20 under the Italian Presidency.

So, 2021 is full of opportunities. We will also continue to deliver bigger, better and smarter to transform the lives of millions of women, men and youth, as we have been discussing all along.

I would like to take a moment to thank Frank Mars who I believe was really quite inspirational yesterday when he shared his perspectives and his engagement – and that of his colleagues – in helping the cause of small-scale producers. This is the type of engagement that we want to have with the private sector. We want to ensure that we can encourage our youth to take their own entrepreneurial initiatives.

We will also continue focusing on the most vulnerable and marginalized so that the whole food system transformation is inclusive, sustainable and equitable. We have heard from the representative of the indigenous peoples' forum about the outcomes of their deliberations and we know that these dimensions are intertwined.

Our programme of work will continue integrating and taking into account the indigenous peoples' dimension. We will also accelerate access to technology and adoption of innovative approaches for small-scale producers to seize new opportunities.

In closing, I cannot help but remind us all that the heart of the matter, as I indicated yesterday, will continue to be: How do we use these instruments? How do we use IFAD, which *prima facie* is a development financier? How do we use IFAD in its current state, with an AA+ credit rating, to continue bridging the financing gap in our effort to achieve SDG 1 and SDG 2, particularly for the small-scale producers in our rural areas?

We should not shy away from having a frank discussion on these important subject matters. I know it is going to be difficult, but that is exactly why we are here. The difficulty of the subject matter must not stop us from trying. Very often it is the lack of trying that makes the task difficult.

In the coming weeks and months, we will need your maximum support to reach the highest possible outcome for IFAD12 to pave the way for doubling our impact. I know I can continue counting on you to give IFAD the strength we need to realize our vision.

Finally, distinguished Governors, allow me once again to thank you so much for the continued trust in me, a trust that I do not take for granted. I promise that we will continue doing our very best so that you will not be disappointed.

Thank you.