

**Closing statement by His Excellency Christophe Schiltz,
Chairperson of the forty-eighth session of the
Governing Council of IFAD**

Mr President,
Distinguished Governors and delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Now that the forty-eighth session of the Governing Council of IFAD is drawing to a close, I would like to take a few moments to convey my sincere gratitude to each of you. Your active participation in our exchanges, and the views you have shared, are of the highest value.

The theme of this session, "Catalysing investment at the 1st mile", has been at the heart of our exchanges over the past few days. As the proverb says, "a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". And that single step is decisive. By focusing on creating opportunities and building resilience among marginalized and vulnerable rural communities, IFAD is ideally placed to have a real impact at the first mile.

Smallholder farmers are true drivers of change. They produce close to a third of all food in the world. They sustain their families and communities. And yet they face innumerable difficulties: climate change, insecurity, natural disasters, high production costs, limited access to markets, financing, land and resources, and a lack of prospects. It is crucial that we give priority to their needs and help them realize their potential.

We were privileged to hear from three African leaders, His Majesty King Letsie III of the Kingdom of Lesotho, His Excellency Julius Maada Wonie Bio, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Her Excellency Dr Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, whose message was delivered by His Excellency Hussein Bashe, Minister for Agriculture. Their personal commitment to bettering the lives of their people is inspiring. Each brought a message of hope. Each called for immediate and decisive action to build a better future, a secure and sustainable future. I thank them once again for their unique insights and for sharing powerful messages of determination.

It is true, the challenges are many, but not insurmountable. Particularly if we work in partnership. We must pool our expertise and, in the words of His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah in his message delivered by Her Excellency Noora Sulaiman Salem Al Fassam, Minister for Finance and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investments, we must act boldly and invest wisely.

The importance of partnership was a common thread in the statements of His Excellency Dr Muhammad Yunus, Chief Adviser of the interim Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, His Excellency Giancarlo Giorgetti, Minister for Economy and Finance of the Italian Republic, His Excellency Dr Muhammad Al Jasser, President of the Islamic Development Bank, and Her Excellency Janja Lula da Silva, First Lady of the Federative Republic of Brazil. We must work together with a shared purpose to realize the objectives of the 2030 Agenda and ensure that no one is left behind.

Distinguished Governors,

In addition to discussing a number of agenda items that are fundamental to IFAD's mission, the Governing Council has also benefited from a unique opportunity to contribute actively to shaping the discourse around several key global initiatives – such as the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development and the Nutrition for Growth Summit – as well as

reviewing the achievements and upcoming objectives of the G7 and G20. Developing innovative financing mechanisms, pooling our resources, investing strategically in future generations and scaling impact are equally critical challenges. Collaboration at the country level can advance these issues. The Peru and Pacific Islands country teams, having received the Rome-based Agencies Award of Excellence, are setting a good example in this regard.

We have had an opportunity to carry on a dialogue with Indigenous Peoples and learn more about the key role they play in preserving biodiversity and recovering traditional knowledge. We have also gained a better understanding of the power of knowledge and partnerships within the framework of South-South and Triangular Cooperation. Solutions exist, and it is up to us to share them for the good of all women and men, in the hope of building a better future.

The annual Governors round table provided an occasion for a more in-depth review of the efforts deployed by IFAD in an increasingly complex world and to highlight the challenges, but also the opportunities, this means in terms of the organization's ability to implement transformative country programmes.

Distinguished Governors,

It was both a pleasure and an honour for me to chair this session of IFAD's Governing Council. I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you and to my colleagues on the Bureau. His Excellency Abubakar Kyari, Minister for Agriculture and Food Security of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Governor for Nigeria, and Her Excellency Tatiana Rosito, Ambassador and Deputy Minister of Finance for International Affairs of the Federative Republic of Brazil and Governor for Brazil.

Additionally, I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to President Lario for his dedication, passion, and committed leadership of the Fund. A special thanks goes out to all the staff at IFAD, including the Secretariat team, messengers, interpreters, technicians, and everyone working behind the scenes to make this session a success.

Just like the President said, let us show again our appreciation with a well-deserved round of applause for them all!

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As this session of the Governing Council draws to a close, our work is just beginning. In this, the first year of the Thirteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources period, the Fund's commitment remains unwavering: to invest at the first mile, forging strategic partnerships to support livelihoods and promote prosperity in rural areas and build resilience in the face of the root causes of fragility.

Five years from 2030, we find ourselves at a decisive moment. We have seen how IFAD's investments in rural people generate tangible and durable change, contributing actively to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Programme by 2030.

Now it is time to close ranks and defend IFAD. It is time to plead IFAD's cause and assert its essential role in combating poverty and hunger. Together we can redouble our efforts and truly make a difference.

In conclusion, let me quote another proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together".

On that note, I hereby declare the forty-eighth session of the Governing Council closed.