

Consultation on the Twelfth Replenishment
of IFAD's Resources
Fourth Session

Opening Statement by
President Gilbert F. Houngbo

IFAD headquarters,
Rome
10 December 2020

Distinguished delegates,

Welcome to this fourth Consultation session on the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources.

Today marks the 72nd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹

It is therefore fitting to recall our commitment through the Declaration to recognize that the dignity and equal rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. And of our duty to promote social progress and better standards of life, particularly for those most left behind.

These rights are fundamental to the work of the United Nations, and to IFAD.

COVID-19 has been devastating for human health and global economies. As we work to rebuild and recover, the Declaration of Human Rights reminds us that we must remain unshakeable in our commitment to poor rural people – particularly women, youth and indigenous peoples.

Today also marks the official ceremony of the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the World Food Programme, which is occurring even as we speak.

This prize signals global recognition that the fate of the hungry, the poor and the displaced matters. It signals an understanding that hunger is driven by climate change, by conflicts and by economic shocks, and it encourages us to double our efforts to invest in the livelihoods and resilience of vulnerable and marginalized rural people and a way for us to be able to create a world free from hunger.

Colleagues,

With this in mind, let us turn our attention to the final session of IFAD12.

It has been an intense journey, marked by many substantive discussions. I would like to commend you for your frankness, stamina and engagement, particularly under unusual circumstances. This has allowed us to build consensus around the priorities for IFAD12, and to consolidate the Fund's strategic direction heading towards 2030.

The road to the SDGs runs through rural areas. That is where food is grown, where our richest natural resources and biodiversity are, and where the poorest and most marginalized people live. So, allow me to repeat this again: if we are seriously committed to eradicating poverty and hunger, we must – we must – invest in rural areas and rural people.

At this crucial moment – despite uncertainties and the prospect of further difficult months before the pandemic abates – we have to take action. We have to stand up for rural people and for our collective future.

And I know you have done that.

This is a moment to recognize the significance of what we have achieved together. It is also the time to take the necessary steps so that this replenishment is successful.

Step one is agreeing on the report and resolution. Step two is working to secure the significant contributions and the borrowing needed to expand our programme of loans and grants. And, of course, to increase our support to the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

My hope is that today we will seal our agreement on the ambition for IFAD12.

When we last met, there were many statements in support of scenarios D and E. There was also some support for scenario C. However, there was a convergence around

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

scenario D. We also know that some of you who were not quite there in October have now secured the necessary support for scenario D in your capitals.

We must not let down our poorest and most indebted Member States who truly count on us. I want to re-emphasize that we must avoid any scenario that will result in IFAD delivering less than in IFAD11.

At a moment where there are very real concerns about a new food crisis, we just cannot step back.

Under scenario D, IFAD will make a tangible contribution to achieving zero hunger through supporting 140 million small-scale producers to improve resilience, and increase their production, incomes and nutrition.

Permit me to explain how we see the IFAD12 process unfolding from now until the end of 2021.

By the close of business tomorrow, I hope we will have finalized the report, agreed on the replenishment target, and moved ahead with securing the contributions. I also hope to see a clear package of targets, commitments and expected results for IFAD12.

As agreed in October, we will hold the main pledging sessions over two sittings: one during this session and one in February, as the Chair, Kyle Peters mentioned, just before the Governing Council, like we did in February 2018. However, countries can also pledge at any time in writing, and we already have a number of pledges recorded.

This year has been unique in the history of IFAD replenishments, with everything done virtually after our very first meeting.

In the middle of a global pandemic, it can be easy to lose sight of the horizon. But replenishment, by its very nature, forces us to look ahead and plan for the future.

With your guidance and generous contributions, IFAD's direction is more strategic, and our impact is increasingly being recognized. A recent Forbes² magazine article listed IFAD among only four organizations recommended as a partner to financial readers in order to make a difference. It highlighted IFAD's contribution to sustainable and inclusive food production and ending poverty.

By working together for a successful replenishment, we will lay the cornerstone for the IFAD12 period and beyond, allowing IFAD to step up its impact. Rural people need and deserve nothing less.

After the pledging in February, we, as Management, intend to present a paper to the Executive Board in September. By then we will have sufficient pledges. At that stage if the targets need to be adjusted, we will make the necessary analysis and submit it to the Executive Board for a final decision.

Only on the basis of that final decision of the Board in September will the programme of loan and grant be finalized ahead of its implementation in January 2022. With that, let us be reminded that rural people need our support and our help.

Thank you.

² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/globalcitizen/2020/09/24/four-ways-your-money-can-drive-real-results-in-the-covid-era/?sh=2fba14fb20fe>