

43rd session of the IFAD Governing Council

Statement on behalf of BENELUX

This statement to the 43rd session of the IFAD Governing Council is made on behalf of the Governments of the Kingdom of Belgium, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It underpins BENELUX's longstanding tradition of working together on substantive issues both within the EU and in the wider international context.

The theme of the 2020 Governing Council "Investing in sustainable food systems to end hunger by 2030" is well timed. Unfortunately, projections have shown that if no major changes will be made to food systems and agriculture, a further 2 billion people will be hungry in 2050. Therefore IFAD's vision to support rural economies to become vibrant, inclusive and sustainable where people live free from poverty and hunger is becoming ever more important and urgent. In this context, we welcome IFAD's new ways of thinking to seek closer collaboration with the private sector, an increasingly important partner in the implementation of Agenda 2030.

It is clear that at the current pace SDG 2 can hardly be reached. The levels of food insecurity over the past three years have been rising. With only a decade left to reach the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we have no time to waste. IFAD is a key partner for us in order to achieve SDG 1 and 2, and the BENELUX States strongly support IFAD in fulfilling its mission to transform rural economies and food systems by making them more inclusive, productive, resilient and sustainable. We also encourage IFAD to execute its mission in close collaboration with the other Rome Based Agencies, International Financial Institutions and other UN entities, in line with the reform of the United Nations development system.

Last year was a crucial year. In order to ensure a sustainable financial future, IFAD's management and its Member States had to rethink the financial and institutional architecture of the Fund. BENELUX congratulates the President of IFAD for the proposed solutions, in particular the reform of the Debt Sustainability Framework and the steps that have been made towards a credit assessment. It is key that we strike the right balance between helping countries that are in (high risk of) debt distress while maintaining the financial sustainability of the Fund in the future.

An important year lies ahead of us with the replenishment negotiations for IFAD12. To ensure a fit-for-purpose organization, IFAD Member States and management will have to discuss balancing the mobilization of funds, the allocation of funds, and the use of funds to optimize delivery on its important mandate. In these discussions, it is of the utmost importance to ensure that IFAD maintains its comparative advantage: its ability and commitment to reach the last mile, to work in the most remote areas benefitting the most vulnerable people who are at risk of being left behind. In this context, we reiterate our full support to the President's priority of mainstreaming the themes of climate, gender, youth and nutrition in IFAD's operations. Investing in development and growth also means investing in women and girls. We commend IFAD for the attention it is giving to this important topic and urge IFAD to keep gender equality institutionally on top of the agenda. BENELUX looks forward to further cooperation with all IFAD Member States and management in 2020 and beyond to improve systems and policies that prevent and respond to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the development sector, in particular, through prompt and effective reporting to Member States to pre-empt reports through the media, including social media.

BENELUX looks forward to an open, frank and constructive dialogue leading to a successful replenishment of IFAD as a next step in our continuous fruitful partnership.