

Fifth Global Meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD
*The value of indigenous food systems: resilience in the context of the
COVID-19 pandemic*

Closing remarks

by

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Representatives of Indigenous Peoples,
Partners and friends,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here with you, although in a virtual setting, to deliver these closing remarks to this Global Meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum.

My name is Dominik Ziller, and I had the honour to join IFAD as its Vice-President six months ago. Although this is my first time participating in the Forum as an IFAD representative, it is not my first time attending the Forum.

I had that privilege two years ago, as the IFAD Governor for Germany. Even then, I was very impressed by the strong partnership between IFAD and you, the indigenous communities.

I was particularly impressed by the shared understanding that a better future for indigenous communities – and indeed, for the world -- can only be built if we respect and tailor actions to your identities, your values and cultures.

Today, at my 'second' forum, I again feel privileged to witness this incredible platform for open dialogue 10 years after its inception. It reassures me that this partnership is still bearing fruit and flourishing.

The numbers speak for themselves. The Forum and the indigenous week brought together more than 900 persons from 73 different indigenous peoples around the world. There were 75 speakers, and 9

side events in addition to the main Forum. This is outstanding. We should all be very proud.

The two weeks were notable for their intense, lively and enriching discussions. I will not even attempt to capture all the key points – we would be here all night! And they will be available for all to see later, in the synthesis report.

Instead, I would like to recall a few of the highlights.

The introduction by IFAD's President Gilbert Houngbo, set the scene by clearly recognizing the important and central role that indigenous knowledge and indigenous people must play to achieve the 2030 agenda.

His Holiness Pope Francis, sent a powerful message, reaffirming the importance of development while at the same time listening, learning and respecting the environment.

I was pleased to see the participation of the UN Special Envoy to the Food Systems Summit, Agnes Kalibata, at the discussion on the value of indigenous food systems. Dr Kalibata shared her commitment to ensuring that the world benefits from indigenous knowledge, wisdom and values. This is particularly important in light of the Food Systems Summit that will be happening later this year.

I understand that there were important exchanges of knowledge and experience at the regional meetings and events on topics such as biodiversity, afro-descendants communities in Latin America and the Caribbean, access to land and the Indigenous Peoples Assistance Facility (IPAF), to name a few. These discussions will surely help shape IFAD's interventions and advocacy.

And let us not forget the Indigenous Film Festival. To have impact, the world needs to see the human faces behind the headlines, and film is a powerful medium for sharing stories about indigenous land territories and resources.

Ladies and gentlemen, partners and friends,

The main theme of this forum "*The value of indigenous food systems: resilience in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic*" could not be more critical.

After almost a year of pandemic, I fear we are all of us reaching "pandemic" fatigue. It is hard to live in a constant state of emergency, to be always alert and vigilant, without any clear knowledge of when this will end.

Millions of people are forced to be apart from loved ones. Our children cannot hug their grandparents. And too many of us have lost loved ones or have dear friends who have experienced tragedy.

Many in indigenous communities have shared this pain, and worse. The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities and discrimination. It has caused disproportionate suffering among the world's most marginalized, and that very much includes indigenous peoples. And there is a real and growing danger that the pandemic may further aggravate the scarcity of resources and the indigenous communities' vulnerability to climate change.

The 476 million persons of indigenous and tribal communities worldwide make up 6 per cent of the global population. They have lost incomes. It has become harder for them to buy food and essential

goods. And at the same time, the conditions that held them back before the pandemic persist, including limited access to land, to clean water and to proper sanitation and healthcare, or being caught up in areas of conflict.

As IFAD's Vice President, I want you to know that we are not deaf, and we are not blind to the situation of indigenous peoples. We know that indigenous communities are more than twice likely to live in extreme poverty. And that many face a further threat from the very mechanisms being developed to help the world recover from this crisis, that may further deprive them of access to land and natural resources.

And as a UN specialised agency, IFAD is aware that the exclusion and marginalization of indigenous communities threatens the central tenet of the 2030 Agenda – to leave no one behind.

This exponentially increases the relevance of this event. In the months ahead, IFAD will do its part to maintain our close engagement. To listen and support you. To do our part to have your voices heard. And to amplify them to transform the future.

IFAD is committed to promoting an inclusive process to support indigenous communities in improving nutrition and safeguarding their wellbeing. We also recognise and support the vital role indigenous peoples play in rebalancing the relation between human and nature to reduce the risk of a future pandemic.

On your side, your role is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. You hold invaluable knowledge and can help shape the solutions to climate resilience, and promoting food systems that provide healthy nutrition for all.

Your territories are home to 80% of the world's biodiversity, which place indigenous peoples at the centre of sustainable management of the world's lands and ecosystems.

I am convinced beyond a doubt that, together, we are uniquely well-positioned to support resilience the world over, and the transformation of food systems to make them sustainable, inclusive, and equitable for all.

As the IFAD President said, the ideas and insights shared during these days will be fundamental to shape both the direction of our partnership going forward and IFAD's contribution to the Food Systems Summit.

I would like to conclude by affirming IFAD's commitment to keep the momentum going, and to make every effort to translate these deliberations into meaningful, timely and concrete actions, to ensure that the key messages of the Forum are brought to the Food System Summit, and to actively support the implementation of the regional action plans and the enhancement of the IPAF.

On behalf of the President and myself,

I would like to thank:

each one of the IFAD colleagues responsible for organizing an event of this magnitude in a virtual setting. Thank you, well done.

AIPP, FAO, FILAC, FIMI, Fundación ACUA, the International Land Coalition, IWGIA, Slow Food, the Samburu Women Trust, SIDA, Tebtebba and UNESCO for the outstanding partnership to make this event happen.

Lastly, before giving the floor to Mr Mattia Prayer Galletti, I would like to thank all delegations and representatives of the indigenous communities for working together with us during this event, and all the participants.

My best wishes to all of you during these very difficult times. Stay well and stay safe. I am looking forward to meeting you again at the next Forum, hopefully in person, and hope we will have many accomplishments to report when we reconvene in two years.

Thank you.