

44th session of the IFAD Governing Council

Statement on behalf of BENELUX

Delivered by Ambassador Frank Carruet,

Permanent representative of Belgium to the Rome-based UN Agencies

This statement to the 44th 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 2021 Governing Council "Rural development: a prerequisite for global resilience" is well timed. Unfortunately, figures show us that the World is not on track to reach the SDGs by the 2030 deadline. The coronavirus pandemic and measures to contain it have plunged the global economy into the worst recession since World War II, worsening food insecurity and malnutrition. The pandemic may add between 83 million and 132 million people to the total number of undernourished, and it is already apparent that the most affected will be the poorest and most vulnerable segments of the population.

In this current context, the BENELUX stresses the need for increased multilateralism, and underlines the unique and relevant mandate of IFAD, as the only specialized global development organization exclusively dedicated to transforming agriculture, rural economies and food systems. The BENELUX welcomes the establishment of the 'Rural Poor Stimulus Facility', as a response to the pandemic. In these difficult times we continue to stress the need for innovative solutions in order to do more with less.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the vulnerability of our current food systems. The 2021 UN Food System Summit will serve as a critical contribution to the Decade of Action to deliver the 2030 Agenda and to deliver progress on all 17 SDGs. BENELUX congratulates IFAD on its leadership in action track four; and hopes on a successful outcome of the UNFSS, with a clear commitment with bold new actions to transform the way the world produces and consumes food.

Furthermore, the BENELUX States complement IFAD on the many improvements made to this last year. In particular, we appreciate the new steps on public-private partnership. With IFAD's expertise in value chains solutions, we have confidence that these steps will further enhance IFAD's impact on the ground. Responsible private investments need to be leveraged. Therefore we very much welcome the establishment of the Private Sector Financing Programme (PSFP).

2020 was a milestone for IFAD, who received the AA+ credit rating from both Fitch, and Standard & Poor's. We congratulate IFAD to be the first fund in the United Nations system to receive a public credit rating. This will allow IFAD to develop a diversified, broader and more predictable funding base, including access to private funds, to invest in increasing rural prosperity and development in the world's poorest countries. This is a prerequisite for building global stability and resilience.

The BENELUX reiterates the importance of the building back better the agenda for global resilience during the post COVID-19 period. We therefore encourage the focus on Climate Change and the alignment with the Paris Agreement. We embrace the ambitious climate financing target set in the IFAD12 report; as rural people, especially small-scale farmers are among those suffering the impacts of a changing climate the most. We are confident that IFAD12 will take the current climate approach further, by increasing the focus on mitigation and resilience, and addressing the interlinkages between climate, fragility, nutrition and social inclusion.

To conclude, we complement IFAD management for the well-organized consultations of the replenishment for IFAD12, especially in these challenging circumstances. The BENELUX congratulates IFAD on the outcome of IFAD12 and is pleased to see an increase in IFAD12 pledges of many Member States.

BENELUX looks forward to further cooperation with all Member States and Management in 2021 and beyond, with promising years ahead: an increase of IFAD's impact and making it a financially sustainable organization through the diversification of resources.