

45th Session of the Governing Council, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) General Statement by Ireland Wednesday 16th February, 2022

Delivered by H.E Patricia O'Brien,

Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Rome-based UN Agencies and Ireland's Governor-designate to IFAD

Mr. President, Mr. Chairman, Governors, and Distinguished Guests,

It is my honour to present this national statement on behalf of the Government of Ireland to the 45th Session of the Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

As we enter the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, IFAD's role in the global response to rural poverty and sustainable agricultural development has never been more important. Ireland believes that IFAD has a strong comparative advantage in this endeavour.

Reinforcing IFAD's role, and strengthening the organisation's focus on reaching the furthest behind are central to Ireland's membership of the IFAD Executive Board for the period 2021-2023. Ireland is also concerned with the need for IFAD to have flexible and predictable resources to effectively deliver on this.

The COVID-19 pandemic, compounding the devastating impacts of increasing global conflict and climate change, has driven alarming levels of hunger worldwide. It is unacceptable that over 280 million people go to bed hungry in Africa alone. It is unacceptable that worldwide, nearly 150 million children under 5 are stunted. And in the 21st Century, more than 45 million children experience the most visible and risible manifestation of hunger- wasting.

To be at the forefront of the response to these interlinked challenges, IFAD must have our collective support.

Ireland also believes that IFAD has a unique role in supporting food systems transformation. Transforming how we produce, consume and think about the food we eat are the basis for establishing a sustainable future for agriculture and associated livelihoods.

Today's Governing Council takes place as many wealthy countries are starting to emerge from some of the most intense moments of the COVID-19 Pandemic. At the same time, many of IFAD's member states still do not have access to vaccines, to social protection, to alternative education or to decent work and sustainable livelihoods. Recovery is a gravely unequal global prospect in 2022 and beyond.

Today's Governing Council picks up on many of the existential challenges highlighted during 2021 - at COP26, at the Nutrition 4 Growth Summit and throughout the Food Systems Summit process. Ireland believes concerted action to deliver on the commitments made at these global events is vital if we are to transform our societies and safeguard our futures - and those of future generations.

As a small island, with experience of famine and dependence on small-scale agriculture, Ireland's food systems have themselves seen a transformation. We have strengthened production, added significant value and delivered food systems strategy that will deliver for

climate, biodiversity and healthy diets. We have done so through including a cross-section of society in the effort. While we still have a way to go, we understand the critical role food systems play in society and communities, and we are investing heavily in improving diets.

Ireland's experience has taught us that systemic, inclusive approaches are the only way to tackle complex challenges of this nature - and this has informed our engagement with the Food Systems Summit, our tenure on the Security Council and our Food Vision 2030 strategy. As we implement this innovative approach learning from others and sharing our story will be vital.

We hope to use this experience to partner with IFAD and our fellow members to promote nationally led food systems transformation.

Mr President,

Ireland is convinced now more than ever that we need to put the furthest behind first in our efforts to ensure an inclusive recovery. In our collective push to meet SDG2, we strongly urge IFAD management to be creative and innovative in prioritising the needs of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. IFAD must support them in accessing the broadest range of financial and technical supports possible. IFAD has a unique ability to shepherd essential finances - especially climate finance - to where it is most needed: to farms; small businesses; and to rural communities. In short, IFAD has fostered an approach that nourishes sustainable rural communities, and the crucial role of women in food systems, and sustainable agriculture.

Ireland's support for IFAD's ASAP+ initiative represents our belief that that the organisation is among the best placed to channel climate finance to small-scale producers. We urge IFAD to continue to develop its leadership in the field of Adaptation at such a critical juncture, to build the resilience of those least responsible for climate change. In 2022, Ireland will increase its financial contribution to ASAP+. This, complimented by a 67% increase in our commitment to IFAD's 12th replenishment cycle, will help IFAD to truly deliver on its mandate, especially for the poorest. We urge other donor members to consider providing financial support to ASAP+ and strengthen their contributions to IFAD12.

We also know that responding to the challenges that we face requires both the public and the private sector to work together. In this regard, Ireland is working with the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility to support the sustainable management of the fisheries sector in Caribbean countries. In particular, through the CCRIF, we are working to help vulnerable fisher folk access insurance in the aftermath of natural disasters.

Mr President, colleagues,

Ireland would like to finish by acknowledging the work that has been done in recent years by IFAD in strengthening its performance in fragile states, sharpening its climate response, and better targeting women and marginalised groups. Many institutional reforms have been progressed, or are being progressed, simultaneously. Ireland stands with you, and will continue to champion bold actions needed in the pursuit of zero hunger, during the remainder of our tenure on the Executive Board, and beyond.

Thank you