

*47<sup>th</sup> session of the IFAD Governing Council*

*Statement on behalf of the BENELUX*

*Delivered by Ambassador Lieven De La Marche*

*Permanent Representative of Belgium to FAO, IFAD and WFP*

This statement to the 47<sup>th</sup> session of the Governing Council is made on behalf of the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It underpins BENELUX's longstanding tradition of working together on substantive issues both within the EU and in other multilateral fora.

First of all, the BENELUX congratulates IFAD for the unprecedented results achieved so far in the Thirteenth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources process. These results mirror the trust of the members states in IFAD's activities and mandate and reflect the shared vision on the need to invest in lasting solutions to build rural people's resilience for a food-secure future for all, especially for those most in need. The BENELUX supports IFAD13's priority areas: fragility, climate change and biodiversity, and leveraging the private sector to deliver on the SDGs, that present significant opportunities where IFAD can build on its experience to deliver more and better results for its target groups, transforming local food systems, ensuring inclusion to empower rural communities, and focusing on the last mile and on those most at risk of being left behind.

The BENELUX compliments IFAD on its commitments to continuing focus on women and girls' empowerment as a critical cross-cutting theme in all of IFAD's work, including in fragile contexts.

The BENELUX is hopeful that the newly proposed financing model of the Private Sector Financing Programme (PSFP) under IFAD13 will significantly increase IFAD's investments in rural development and small-scale agriculture.

This year's theme of the Governing Council "Innovation for a food-secure future" is of the greatest importance. Achieving the SDG's and addressing the complex and often interconnected development challenges of our times require investments in innovation, including the use of new approaches and technologies. The BENELUX therefore commends IFAD for its approach to innovation that impacts poor rural people, directly. IFAD's ambition to catalyze the generation, testing and scaling up of solutions that contribute to a greater impact

of its activities is pertinent to strengthen its comparative advantages. In doing so, it will be crucial to adapt the innovative solutions to IFAD's target groups, namely the smallholder farmers, including women, people living in poverty in rural areas as well as vulnerable populations at risk of falling into poverty in rural geographies, with a continuing priority on the poorest and most excluded.

Furthermore, the BENELUX wishes to commend Management's effort to contain the real increase in the 2024 budget to 1,7%, despite the very difficult external environment and supports the focus on operations implementation and supervision. The BENELUX welcomes the very ambitious Programme of Loans and Grants for this year with a record number of 38 new projects and programmes, and 11 additional financing proposals, in the pipeline for approval during 2024.

We furthermore welcome the fact that IFAD has continued its decentralization efforts and commend the organization for the next implementation of its first regional office in the Asia and the Pacific region (APR) in Bangkok. The BENELUX is looking forward to receiving regular updates on expenditures related to Decentralization 2.0. and encourages IFAD to maintain its firm commitment to staff well-being while further enhancing its onboarding and training processes.

Finally, the BENELUX welcomes the application for non-original membership by the Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Serbia.