



INTERNATIONAL
COFFEE
ORGANIZATION



ICC 136-3

16 October 2023
English only

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International Coffee Council
136th Session
28 and 29 September 2023
Bengaluru, India

**Statement by the Chair of the
International Coffee Council, Mr
Massimiliano Fabian, made at the
opening ceremony of the 136th
Session of the Council**

Executive Director,

Honourable delegates,

Dear Members and Observers and ICO staff

Welcome to the 136th Session of the International Coffee Council. I am honoured to be reunited with you following our successful online session back in March.

Today, I stand before you once again to remind each and every one of us of the key role coffee plays in our world. Coffee touches the lives of countless individuals, from the rural communities that cultivate it, fuelling economic and social progress, to entire nations that benefit from its economic value, as well as the many incomes and jobs it creates, from seed to cup and from farmers to baristas. It is a vital ingredient in various industries and, of course, a source of delight for millions of consumers worldwide. I want to start this Session by thanking you for contributing to the enhancement of the coffee value chain, also through your active engagement in the activities of the ICO: we are the ICO, and we shall continue working together to achieve a common vision, as decided in the International Coffee Agreement

Our collective mission is clear: to make the coffee sector an example of sustainability and fairness, bridging the existing gaps in income, gender, and intergenerational well-being. The work undertaken by the International Coffee Organization (ICO) and its Coffee Public-Private Task Force holds immense significance. It fosters a common vision, encourages knowledge sharing, and attracts the necessary resources and financing to support our goals.

We must persist in assisting coffee growers to implement essential changes and deal with potential threats to their livelihoods. The continued collaboration and expansion of partnerships between the public and private sectors are fundamental in creating an

environment conducive to change and addressing the sustainability challenges facing the industry towards prosperity.

During coffee year 2022/23, which will draw to a close in a few days' time, we have encountered several challenges. Farmers are facing increased pressure due to volatility of prices and exchange rates; we had to learn how to navigate through new regulatory frameworks like the European Union's Regulation on deforestation-free products, also known as EUDR, and other due diligence requirements; we coped with the rising costs of inputs, transportation, and transactions; and we dealt with global socio-political instability and the ever-present spectre of climate change, exacerbated by phenomena like El Niño, affecting again nations worldwide.

As Chair of the International Coffee Council (ICC), I am proud to report that, in perfect synergy with Vanusia, the most knowledgeable, energetic, determined and creative Executive Director, and her exceptional team, we managed to stay focused on numerous key themes, achieving tangible success in:

- Encouraging more countries to sign the innovative ICA 2022, a move that benefits all members of the coffee community, especially producing countries.
- Strengthening our visibility and engagement with key stakeholders from civil society, academia and both the public and private sectors, the UN and other development partners.
- Moving forward the cooperation between governments and the private sector.
- Amplifying the ICO's efforts to attract additional funding and establish more partnerships for the benefit of all ICO Members. In this sense, it is my sincere hope that when I pass the chairmanship to my successor, he or she will continue to nurture the vision of creating a dedicated fund or facility for the sustainability and resilience of the coffee sector, and foster the implementation of circular and regenerative solutions to increase incomes and jobs and reduce the impact on the environment as we adapt to climate change.

As someone who is part of the coffee industry, I have confidence that this reinvigorated ICO, which we all appreciate, will rise to the occasion, overcoming every challenge and delivering the best possible value and services to us all. Today I invite you, honourable delegates, to take advantage of being together here in Bengaluru and play an active role in discussions and the decision-making process, always in a spirit of cooperation and companionship.

Lastly, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated individuals I have had the privilege of working with over the past 12 months: Vanusia, Gerardo, Veronica and the whole Secretariat of the Organization. Together, we have achieved significant strides, and I am grateful for your commitment.

Thank you.