

International Coffee Council
137th Session
19 March 2024
London, United Kingdom

**Statement by the Chair of the
International Coffee Council,
Dr Enselme Gouthon, made at the
opening ceremony of the 137th Session
of the Council**

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

ICO Executive Director,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all to this 137th session of the International Coffee Council and to thank you for taking time out of your schedules to attend this online meeting.

In September 2023, at the 136th session of the Council in Bangalore, India, I had the honour of being elected as Chair of the International Coffee Council (ICC), with the support of all of you, to lead our deliberations and promote our activities during coffee year 2023/24.

On that occasion, I set out the main strategic objectives that we intended to pursue with the ICO Secretariat, to ensure that every player in the value chain would benefit. I would like to remind you that these objectives are based on three important pillars:

- supporting stakeholders within the sector to enhance their professional skills in coffee-related jobs;
- helping to improve producers' incomes in a sustainable way;
- strengthening triangular and South-South cooperation between Member countries to modernize production, development and marketing practices.

I would like to take advantage of this plenary session not only to reaffirm my gratitude for the trust you have placed in me, but also to reiterate my commitment to working with the ICO Secretariat to achieve these objectives.

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

This March, a month which symbolises the fight for greater equality on issues of gender inclusion, I would like to congratulate our organization, which remains a model in this field.

I am delighted to be working with Ms Vanusia Nogueira, the ICO's Executive Director, who, with her expertise and dynamism, is promoting women's entrepreneurship in our various Member countries.

I salute all women's associations and the thousands of mothers and daughters who work so hard to make quality coffee available to consumers.

I would like to remind all of us of the importance of mentoring programmes and a strong commitment to improving the integration of women in coffee-related professions.

In the case of my country, Togo, I can tell you that almost half the workforce on farms and in the coffee value chain is made up of women. Togo shares the same constraints and challenges that threaten the coffee sector worldwide.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to reiterate my congratulations to the Executive Director and her Secretariat for their hard work and dedication. If they are to continue working as we want them to, we will have to play our part, in particular by honouring our financial commitments.

As for me personally, I am fully committed to doing everything in my power to promote consensus in the search for solutions to the challenges we face.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Honourable delegates,

As the global coffee community, we have a responsibility to work together in a spirit of cooperation to meet the challenges facing our coffee industry.

As ICO Members, we have a duty and an obligation to ensure the fulfilment of the mandate of the International Coffee Agreement, which seeks to promote the sustainable development of the coffee sector within a market-based environment for the well-being of all stakeholders.

We must support the ICO Secretariat in its task of administering the Agreement, not only for the ever-increasing number of consumers around the world, but above all for the more than 25 million smallholder farmers whose livelihoods depend directly on coffee.

I look forward to constructive debates and deliberations at this 137th Session.

And, as Chair, I am committed to creating an open and supportive environment for all, while emphasising the need to find practical solutions to ensure a bright future for the coffee sector worldwide.

Thank you for your kind attention.