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Status of implementation of the ICO's Memoranda of Understanding

Background

1. Following a request for an evaluation of the implementation of the Organization's partnerships submitted by Members at the 139th Session of the International Coffee Council, the Secretariat has compiled and structured information on the activities being carried out within the framework of its Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs).

2. **Annex I** of this document provides details on the existing MoUs of the International Coffee Organization. The information is presented in an informative manner to provide Members with objective content to be noted and discussed at the 140th Session of the Council in San Pedro Sula, Honduras.

Action

The Council is invited to note the information contained in **Annex I**.

Status of implementation of the ICO's Memoranda of Understanding

CONTEXT

As stated in the **Preamble** of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) 2007, cooperation among Members, international organizations, the private sector, and all other relevant stakeholders is considered essential to supporting the development of the global coffee sector.

More specifically, **paragraph 1 of Article 15** of the ICA 2007, "Cooperation with other organizations", states that "the Council may make arrangements for consultation and cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies; other appropriate intergovernmental organizations; and relevant international and regional organizations".

The ICA 2007 also encourages collaboration with non-governmental organizations in **Article 16**, according to which "in pursuing the objectives of this Agreement, the Organization may, without prejudice to the provisions of Articles 15, 29, 30 and 31, establish and strengthen cooperative activities with appropriate non-governmental organizations having expertise in relevant aspects of the coffee sector and with other experts in coffee matters."

In light of the above provisions, the International Coffee Organization (ICO), through the endorsement of the International Coffee Council, has maintained a long-standing practice of engaging in formal cooperation frameworks with a wide range of stakeholders. These partnerships are frequently established through **Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs)**, which serve as non-binding instruments to facilitate joint activities in line with the objectives of the ICA 2007.

SCOPE

This document outlines activities implemented under currently active MoUs that have been approved by the Council and formally signed by all relevant parties.

To ensure contextual relevance, the document focuses on partnerships and activities undertaken since **coffee year 2021/2022**, when international engagement resumed following widespread disruptions to travel and in-person events caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the broader partnerships, recognizing that many joint activities were already underway prior to the conclusion of the current MoUs—either under previous MoUs or, in the case of more recent collaborations, before formalization.

There are **five MoUs currently in force**. Of these, two are fully or partially with a technical cooperation agency of United Nations system (International Trade Centre – ITC; ICO/ITC/Center for Circular Economy in Coffee – C4CEC) and three are with private sector associations and initiatives (Global Coffee Platform - GCP, Specialty Coffee Association – SCA, and the Agency for Robusta Coffee of Africa and Madagascar – ACRAM). Of the five MoUs, four are with partners active across both producing and consuming countries, while one—ACRAM —focuses specifically on the African coffee sector.

The activities foreseen and already being implemented broadly cover the following objectives: promoting sustainable and equitable coffee value chains (including market transparency and sustainable consumption); strengthening farmers' incomes, resilience and access to finance; fostering research, innovation and circular economy practices; and advancing gender equality, youth engagement and capacity development through the delivery of training and educational programmes. Several concrete actions have already taken place, such as joint training sessions in Africa, knowledge-sharing initiatives, the creation of sustainability databases, circular economy reports, and collaborative events with broad participation. Four MoUs have delivered a wide range of activities already (GCP, ITC, ITC and C4CEC and ACRAM) while the MoU with SCA has been activated more recently, with initial activities now being leveraged to further initiatives on capacity development.

1. ACTIVE MOUs

1a. Global Coffee Platform - GCP (document ICC-136-6, signed 29 September 2023)

GCP is a multi-stakeholder membership association bringing together coffee producers, traders, roasters, retailers, Civil Society Organizations, coffee associations, donors, financial institutions with the role of: (i) uniting the coffee community in shared responsibility for a thriving, sustainable coffee sector; (ii) enabling alignment and expansion of activities of a diverse network of stakeholders and initiatives for greater impact; (iii) enabling measurement of individual and collective progress towards shared sustainability goals.

Purpose

1. The Parties agree that the purpose of this Memorandum is to:

   a) promote sustainable development as a means of achieving social and economic progress in coffee producing and importing countries while protecting natural resources.

   b) continue and expand public-private collaborations in the coffee sector which will work towards a sustainable, thriving coffee community and at the same time enable the coffee sector to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals. This collaboration will be known as "Cooperation for Roadmap 2030".

   c) ensure that all activities covered by this Memorandum of Understanding shall be aligned with and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Implemented activities

Even before the creation of the Coffee Public–Private Task Force (CPPTF), GCP and ICO had been working together under a previous MoU to shape a shared public-private vision of a thriving and sustainable coffee sector, combining social and economic progress in producing and importing countries with the protection of natural resources. Lessons learned from GCP, its members and partners were brought to the international level for consideration, adaptation, and scaling in ICO Member countries.

Key milestones include:

- **2018-21:** *Delta Framework Project* – Resulted in an innovative framework designed to bridge the gap in measuring and reporting sustainability performance across the coffee and cotton sectors.
- **2019:** *Sustainability Seminar ("Coffee: How sustainable is our future?")* – Provided perspectives, practical lessons learnt, and recommendations from global coffee leaders, organized as part of the 124th Session of the ICC in Kenya.
- **2019:** *Call to Action* in support of ICC Resolution 465 – Resulted in concrete outputs such as the National Coffee Sustainability Curricula (endorsed by producing country governments); Collective Action Initiatives on sustainability gaps (Vietnam, Brazil, Uganda); indicator alignment; and the creation of GCP's annual *Sustainable Coffee Purchasing Report* based on the Coffee Sustainability Reference Code.
- **2021:** *GCP / CPPTF collaboration* – Together with UNDP, GCP co-facilitated the Multi-stakeholder Forum – Exporting Countries as part of Technical Workstream (TWS) 3 of the CPPTF, focusing on the creation or strengthening of multi-stakeholder platforms to foster collaborative action and an enabling environment for change within the coffee sector in exporting countries and meet the challenges of the future. An *Insights Report* was published, summarizing key learnings and recommendations

Ongoing collaboration

- **GCP / ICO CPPTF**
  - Ongoing collaboration on living and prosperous income and the lessons learnt from diverse country experiences.
  - Building on the trilateral declaration between BMZ, ICO and GCP formalized in January 2024, a joint dialogue (with GIZ) has been set up on living and prosperous income to further align efforts in support of a sustainable, prosperous coffee sector.

- GCP has developed a framework and guidance defining regenerative agriculture in coffee production. ICO/ CPPTF facilitates contact with countries and donors/financial institutions.
- A topic of shared interest is transparency around sustainable coffee purchases. GCP's annual *Sustainable Coffee Purchases Report* will be released in November 2025, based on which the CPPTF and GCP will explore ideas for collaboration.

- Regular engagement between the ICO and the national coffee platforms affiliated with and supported by GCP. Several of the national coffee platforms participate actively in the Technical Workstreams of the CPPTF.

1b. Specialty Coffee Association (document ICC-136-8, signed 1 December 2023)

SCA is a trade association built on foundations of openness, inclusivity, and the power of shared knowledge, with the purpose of fostering a global coffee community and support activities to make specialty coffee a thriving, equitable, and sustainable activity for the entire value chain. As a unified organization established in 2017, SCA has the purpose of fostering a global coffee community and support activity to make specialty coffee a thriving, equitable, and sustainable activity for the entire value chain.

Purpose

1. The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), understood as a joint collaboration, is to:

COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE ICO AND SCA

A) Establish an MoU between both organizations that allows the leverage of their respective outreach and expertise in order to expand the positive influence they seek in the global coffee sector to benefit all coffee sector stakeholders.

B) To focus on:

(i) Creating educational programs for the development of skills in coffee production, trade and commercialization, roasting, brewing and preparation methods aligned with the educational pathways (to be) developed by the SCA;

(ii) Implementing and delivering innovative educational activities to promote understanding and use of the SCA's new Coffee Value Assessment (CVA);

(iii) Implementing and delivering educational programs to strengthen producing countries and enable producer organizations to access specialty coffee and higher-value trading models that distribute value more equitably. The SCA will lead the development of the curriculums and content for each educational activity and will collaborate directly with ICO and its Members;

(iv) Planning and designing together promotion actions focused on high-quality coffee consumption

Implemented activities

2024

- **September (Cameroon)** – Staff from the Conseil Interprofessionnel du Café et du Cacao du Cameroun (CICC) participated in a training session on SCA standards. This capacity-building activity enhanced their knowledge on coffee quality, better positioning Cameroon's coffee sector to meet the demands of the international market.

2025

- **April (Houston, USA – Specialty Coffee Expo)** – The ICO Executive Director engaged with stakeholders on the latest specialty coffee trends, as communicated to ICO Members. Members also received information about the updated Q Grader programme, now integrated into SCA's CVA framework (called the "evolved" Q Grader programme). On this occasion, two institutions from two ICO Member countries – the National Federation of Coffee Growers (FNC) of Colombia and the Brazilian Specialty Coffee Association (BSCA) – also signed agreements with the SCA..
- **May (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire)** – ACRAM, ICO, ITC, and Conseil Café-Cacao co-organized a training session on SCA standards and protocols for baristas and cupping professionals. This activity expanded collaboration with SCA and ITC on building technical skills across several African coffee-producing countries.

Ongoing collaboration

- Preparations are underway for the first pilot of the "Introduction to Specialty Coffee Markets" programme, to be rolled out in African countries in Q4 2025 and Q1 2026, with ITC support.
- During the 140th Session of the Council, SCA will organize a side event on its capacity development programmes related to quality coffee for producing countries.

1c. International Trade Centre - ITC (document ICC-137-4, signed 3 December 2023[1])

ITC is the joint technical cooperation agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. In its aim to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ITC generates sustainable incomes and livelihoods especially for poor households, by connecting enterprises to regional and global markets and enables small business trade success in developing and transition countries by providing, with partners, inclusive and sustainable trade development solutions to the private sector, trade and investment support institutions (TISIs) and policymakers.

Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter referred to as "MOU") is to provide the framework for cooperation between ICO and ITC with the objective of seeking sector coordination and working on priority issues such as prosperous incomes, green transition, value addition at origin and a decent life for coffee producers. The collaboration will promote a more competitive, sustainable, and resilient coffee sector that includes improved market transparency, sustainable production and supply.

Implemented activities

2021

- The ICO was one of the main contributors and part of the advisory panel during the production of the fourth edition of the ITC's Coffee Guide.

2023

- The ICO's Executive Director joined the advisory board of the ITC Coffee Guide Network. The 4th edition of the ITC's Coffee Guide is available in five languages and has been downloaded over 26,000 times, as a result of joint visibility campaigns at coffee sector events and online.
- Through the ACP Business Friendly programme, the following activities were implemented together with ITC, in Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana and Liberia:
    - Distribution and planting of more than 1.2 million seedlings to farmers.
    - Engagement of over 1,500 new young farmers join the coffee industry.
    - Training sessions on roasting, barista skills, and coffee shop management delivered to young entrepreneurs to launch coffee shops and enterprises, aiming to boost local consumption and add value to Robusta coffee.
    - Activation of the Women in Coffee Business Clusters initiative, empowering over 2,000 women and youth involved in the coffee value chain, enhancing their participation in the industry and improving access to financial opportunities.
    - Creation of market linkage initiatives, leading to potential business opportunities worth USD 4.9 million.
    - 11 institutions have strengthened their capabilities to support their members and serve as disseminators of essential information tools and services within the coffee industry.

2023–2025

- Through the Coffee Guide Network, ICO and ITC facilitated 16 panels at international coffee events to share knowledge and resources with 1,862 participants.

[1] Signed on 3 December 2023 but only validated by the Council on 19 March 2024. Please refer to paragraphs 64-66 of the Decisions and Resolutions of the 137th Session of the Council (document ICC-137-7) for further details.

- Through its Alliances for Action initiative and in collaboration with the CPPTF's TWS-3, the ITC and ICO worked on the mapping, collection of information and validation of more than 400 sustainability projects in the coffee sector, which resulted in the Coffee Sustainability Support Database (C2SD). ITC supported the promotion of the C2SD through social media campaigns, online events, and coffee sector events.

2024

- Through the ACP Business Friendly programme, the following activities were implemented together with ITC in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, and Mozambique:
    - Facilitated connections for MSMEs with international buyers, expanding market access across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, and promoting the visibility of regional African coffee at global trade shows, including the World of Coffee Dubai (February), AFCA African Coffee Week (Addis Ababa, February), Cacao & Coffee Festival (Yaoundé, May), World of Coffee Copenhagen, Paris Coffee Show (September), Africa Food System Conference (Kigali, September) and the Swiss Coffee Trade Association (SCTA) Forum (Basel, October).
    - 1.2 million new coffee plants planted, revitalizing coffee production, benefitting smallholder farmers, including first-time growers. 1 million high-quality seedlings produced, ensuring sustainable production for the future. In Democratic Republic of Congo, 2.7 million new coffee plants have been successfully planted across 80 villages since the start of the programme in 2023, directly benefitting 852 farmers, including a significant number of young and first-time coffee growers. This expansion is part of an ongoing effort to revitalize the coffee sector in the Lukula region. More than 3,500 farmers have been reached through collaboration with local partners such as ONAPAC and COCOI.
    - 11,500 farmers, extension officers, and lead farmers trained, boosting coffee productivity and quality through agronomic training and the establishment of demo plots. In Ghana, three coffee nurseries were established in collaboration with CRIG, producing 30,000 seedlings each to improve seedling access and a trainer of trainers (ToT) workshop for 46 Seed Production Division (SPD) extension officers strengthened capacity building on coffee agronomy.
    - Over 600 entrepreneurs supported through specialized training in coffee production and business management, fostering sustainable growth and market expansion.
    - Focused interventions on improving quality standards and production practices, integrating sustainable approaches, and providing resources for improving market access and resilience through climate-smart production. In Ethiopia, the programme facilitated a South-South exchange with India to enhance post-harvest quality and transfer best practices to Ethiopian coffee producers.
    - Supported the launch Ghana's First-Ever Coffee Week: Strengthened market positioning for Ghanaian Robusta coffee by attracting industry stakeholders, facilitating business connections, and promoting local consumption.
- The ICO's Executive Director participated in a high-level panel discussion at ITC entitled "Sustainability in the Coffee Value Chain: from awareness to action" in June 2024.

2025

- **May (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire)** – Co-organization of coffee events by ICO and ITC:
    - Training on SCA standards and protocols for 25 baristas and cupping professionals, co-organized with the Conseil Café-Cacao, SCA and ACRAM.
    - International seminar on the conservation and use of coffee genetic resources, hosted with Crop Trust and the National Centre for Agronomic Research of Côte d'Ivoire (CNRA) in collaboration with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (International Plant Treaty). This event drew 29 participants from 16 countries to explore the challenges and opportunities for advancing the exchange and use of coffee genetic resources for research and development.
    - The official launch of ITC's Agribusiness Investment Promotion Approach for the coffee sector, including a workshop where 40 participants were introduced to ITC's agro-investment methodology, and 15 received targeted training on investment readiness.

- **June (South Africa)** – The ICO worked together with ITC to prepare and participate in ITC's event "Empowering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): Navigating trends and regulations, managing risks and promoting competitiveness in the coffee value chain".
- **July (South Africa)** – The ICO's Executive Director participated at the Global SME Ministerial, co-hosted by ITC and the South African Department of Small Business Development. This event brought together ministers, global institutions, and private sector leaders to explore how small businesses can drive inclusive trade and economic transformation. The Executive Director represented the coffee sector in the Third Ministerial Roundtable as a panellist in the session on private sector views of "Green and inclusive growth for SMEs- climate, nature, circularity and sustainability".
- The Coffee Guide Resource Hub was launched to make resources and tools for the coffee sector more widely available.

Ongoing collaboration

- **2022–present**: ICO CPPTF TWS-3 and ITC have worked closely together on facilitation and guidance for the implementation of th European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). The TWS-3 facilitator contributed to several of ITC's EUDR guidelines, which were shared in TWS-3, where ITC gave presentations on several occasions. In 2025, ICO CPPTF is in regular exchanges with ITC related to facilitation of inclusive EUDR implementation. ITC is part of the Partner Group of the joint actions on EUDR of the CPPTF.
- As part of the collaboration between the ICO CPPTF and the ITC Coffee Network, and under the framework of Responsible business conduct and human rights and environmental due diligence (HREDD), ICO and ITC continue to work to implement accompanying measures, scaling up lessons learnt from the pilots. This has been essential to factor in and capitalize on opportunities as well as to prepare to address challenges and unintended consequences for many MSMEs in coffee in the transition towards complying with HREDD requirements. This collaborative initiative further leverages existing ITC projects and established partnerships with various value chain actors, including producers' organizations and MSMEs in exporting countries, the ISEAL, Fairtrade International, Fairtrade Max Havelaar, Fairtrade Africa, CLAC and ACRAM. The process is being led through the Alliances for Action methodology.
- ICO, ITC and partners are implementing accompanying measures in selected countries, including Ghana and Ethiopia (ACP Business Friendly), and Honduras and Vietnam (CLEAR Supply Chains project). Several other countries were also engaged through information sharing at conferences, workshops, and webinars for global awareness-raising.

1d. ICO, International Trade Centre - ITC and Center for Circular Economy in Coffee –C4CEC (document ICC-137-3, signed 10 December 2023[2])

ITC is the joint technical cooperation agency of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations. In its aim to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ITC generates sustainable incomes and livelihoods especially for poor households, by connecting enterprises to regional and global markets and enables small business trade success in developing and transition countries by providing, with partners, inclusive and sustainable trade development solutions to the private sector, trade and investment support institutions (TISIs) and policymakers.

The Centre for Circular Economy in Coffee (C4CEC) is a precompetitive open-source platform for enhancing Circular Economy in the coffee sector. This Center is a hub founded by Lavazza Foundation, Politecnico di Torino and Unisg and supported by ICO and ITC, with the ambition and objective to collect and share all good practices, solutions, studies and practical information about circular economy as applied to the coffee value chain, from the coffee farming to the consumption and end of life.

Purpose

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter referred to as "MOU") is to collaborate in co-creating, collecting and adapting know-how related to the Circular Economy in the coffee sector and making it available to MSMEs, Value Chain Operators, Farmers and Farmers Organizations, Traders, Roasters, Retailers Farmer Organizations and Consumers in order to achieve a more sustainable sector for all. The knowledge sharing

[2] Signed on 10 December 2023 but only validated by the Council on 19 March 2024. Please refer to paragraphs 63-64 of the Decisions and Resolutions of the 137th Session of the Council (document ICC-137-7) for further details.

and convening shall also support institutions, including associations, universities, research institutions, policymakers and government bodies. This collaboration aims to improve sustainability practices and to connect experts and practitioners by contributing to the circular economy application acceleration in the coffee sector building on the partnerships established through the ITC and ICO's Networks and initiatives.

Implemented activities

2023

- **September**: Formally launched the C4CEC as a precompetitive initiative to advance circular economy in the coffee sector at the 5th CEO and Global Leaders Forum in Bangalore, with approximately 800 participants. The ICO's Executive Director and Head of Operations joined the strategic advisory group.

2023–2025

- C4CEC, ITC, and ICO collectively organized and participated in 11 panels at international coffee events to share learnings on circular economy and regenerative agriculture, with 522 participants: SCA's Specialty Coffee Expo in Houston, World of Coffee Copenhagen and Geneva, and AFCA Addis Ababa and Dar es Salaam,

2024

- **April:** "Making a Case for a Circular Economy in the Coffee Sector: Insights from a multi-stakeholders working group on circular economy in coffee," produced by ITC, C4CEC, and ICO in collaboration with Politecnico di Torino, Lavazza Foundation, and UNIDO.
- **September:** Presented the *Coffee Development Report* at the ICO's 6th CEOs and Global Leaders Forum in London during the panel "Towards a Circular Coffee Economy", with ITC.
- **October:** *Coffee Development Report 2022-23 - Beyond Coffee: Towards a Circular Coffee Economy*, produced by the ICO in partnership with ITC, Politecnico di Torino, C4CEC and the Lavazza Foundation.

2024–2025

- Co-hosted global webinar series "(Re)generating value through circular economy in coffee", which engaged 887 participants across 5 sessions, plus a regional webinar in Africa with AFCA featuring 110 participants.
- ICO contributed to the mapping of circular economy good practices, training materials, and case studies, publicly available on C4CEC website.

2025

- Circular economy research database produced and made available to C4CEC members. ICO participates in the C4CEC research team.
- ICO participated in two panels organized by ITC and C4CEC at international coffee events: SCA's Specialty Coffee Expo and World of Coffee Geneva, with 155 participants.
- C4CEC membership has grown to 64 members plus 3 strategic partners (ITC, ICO, and UNIDO) globally, with members from coffee value chain actors, academia, coffee associations, and public sector, including ICO Members.
- ICO submitted the C4CEC as a "Solution Case" in September 2025, to be showcased in the COP30 Granary of Solutions.

1e. Agency for Robusta Coffee of Africa and Madagascar – ACRAM (document ICC-138-5, signed 12 September 2024)

ACRAM is a non-profit international association representing private and public stakeholders from African Robusta coffee producing countries, aims to enhance the livelihoods of coffee producers, promote Robusta coffee from Africa and Madagascar and bolster the capacity of coffee value chain actors.

Purpose

This Memorandum of Understanding establishes a framework for cooperation between the ICO and ACRAM in strengthening the coffee sector that focuses on the development and promotion of Robusta coffees from Africa and Madagascar.

Implemented activities

2023 (ACP Business Friendly Programme, implemented by ITC, in partnership with ICO)

- **International conference on climate change adaptation (Yaoundé, 7-8 June 2023):**

  Co-organized by ACRAM, ITC and ICO. ACRAM's Research Committee adopted a comprehensive roadmap to strengthen research initiatives, cross-learning, and regional projects for climate resilience in coffee and cacao. The conference showcased Cameroon's proactive leadership in climate change adaptation within the coffee sector.

- **Support of the ACRAM Gender Committee and President of ACRAM**:

  Provided technical assistance to establish a functional communication network ("community of best practices") among national clusters of women in coffee.

- **Representation at Global Forums**:

  In February 2023, ACRAM represented coffee growers' interests at the 3rd World Coffee Producers Forum (WCPF) and the AFCA Coffee Exhibition in Kigali. At the 3rd WCPF and led by the President, ACRAM's six-member delegation played a pivotal role in discussions concerning farmer wealth, climate change, the EUDR, and the integration of new technologies in coffee production.

2024 (ACP Business Friendly Programme – ITC and ICO partnership)

- **New Generation project in Cameroon:**

  Supported 650 young entrepreneurs, fostering entrepreneurship and skill development in the coffee sector.

- **Female empowerment:**

  Trained 53 women entrepreneurs, enhancing their ability to expand their businesses and contribute to the coffee sector's growth.

- **World Coffee Conference (Bengaluru, India):**

  Facilitated the participation of ACRAM countries. Delegates benefitted from immersive experiences such as laboratory sessions, visits to the Coffee Experience Centre, and a specialized training session by Berry Co. on green bean marketing techniques (15 participants from six ACRAM nations).

- **African Coffee Week (February 2024**):

  Promoted African origins and regional integration. Supported the participation of SMEs from the six ACRAM countries and sponsored several barista competitors.

2025

- **May (Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire)**

  ACRAM and ICO co-organized a training session on Specialty Coffee Association (SCA) standards and protocols for baristas and cupping professionals, together with the Conseil Café-Cacao, ITC and SCA

- **June (Geneva, Switzerland)**

  At the ITC headquarters, the ICO, ITC and ACRAM shared coffee related information, delivering the presentation "Coffee exports in a changing global market". The event was attended by key stakeholders, including ACRAM representatives, and ICO Member countries.