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Statement by H.E. Ms Laura Suazo, Minister of Agriculture and Livestock of Honduras, made at the opening ceremony of the 140th Session of the Council

In the heart of Central America, with coffee at its heart, Honduras is a land of mountains – fertile mountains – hard-working, dedicated hands, and dreams cultivated bean by bean. Today, we gather here as a global coffee community to engage in dialogue, to share experiences and to renew our commitments to a product that unites all cultures, all economies and all hopes. Coffee for us is more than a crop; it is our identity, it is a part, it is science, it is art, it is sustenance, and it is also faith. In the face of all the challenges brought by climate change, it is an act of faith, of hope.

Every year in Honduras, more than 120,000 families devote themselves to coffee production on small plots of land. Collectively, their work contributes to the coffee that many of our export leaders place in distinguished markets around the world — markets that may be little known to most producers, but which are represented here today.

Coffee is history; it is effort. Behind every cup of Honduran coffee lies innovation – but also resilience. Many of today's protagonists are not only men, but also women coffee growers, and Honduras is proud to say that we also have young people in rural areas involved in coffee production. This is passed down from generation to generation with hope and a vision for the future.

It is a great honour for us to host the 140th Session of the International Coffee Council and the ICO's 7th CEOs and Global Leaders Forum, and we have taken on this task with the utmost responsibility as a historic opportunity to speak up for those who work the land from dawn every day – sometimes with uncertainty, but always with great dedication and dignity.

We mentioned that more than 120,000 families in our country work in coffee production. This represents over one million people whose livelihoods depend on this sector. At the Secretariat of Agriculture and Livestock, we have made great strides during this administration. Notably, we

have become the first country in history to create a Sub-Secretariat for Coffee, joining Papua New Guinea as one of only two nations that has a ministry dedicated specifically to coffee.

Through this Sub-Secretariat, and under the framework of the State Policy for the Agri-Food Sector, we have not only worked on a *Coffee Bonus* programme that provides fertilizer to coffee growers, but under the leadership of President Castro, we have also begun to restore visibility to coffee producers through a National Agricultural Census — the first update in 32 years — which will soon be published.

In addition, we are supporting partnerships, entrepreneurship, and adding value across the coffee chain, which promises to boost and improve our country's economy, particularly because, together with the Honduran Forest Conservation Institute through a programme called *Agrobosques*, also led by President Castro, 30 million seedlings have been provided, and with the Sub-Secretariat for Coffee, we have achieved, in just two years, the production of 150 million coffee seedlings (120 + 30) — an effort that should serve as a global example of collaboration and coordination among municipalities, municipal associations, and producers. And these seedlings are not just any seedlings, but ones that have received special genetic treatment to provide disease resistance, arising from all the advances, lessons learned, and successes we have accumulated.

We also share the strongest desire to find answers to issues related to the market, trade, and the impact of the coffee sector on people's lives — especially the lives of producers. And so, in the midst of this great event, we would like to conclude by thanking the International Coffee Organization for the trust it has placed in us. We also thank President Xiomara Castro, Foreign Minister Javier Bu, the Government of Honduras, all institutions, the private sector, and the cooperative sector for their support in making this event the highlight of the week.

Thank you for trusting our country – a coffee country – and thank you to each of you for coming to Honduras with the willingness to discuss, listen and build. May this meeting not only be a series of conferences, but a platform to continue transforming realities and strengthening alliances.