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**Statement by the Chair of  
the International Coffee Council,  
Mr John Muldowney, made at the opening  
ceremony of the 128<sup>th</sup> Session  
of the Council**

Dear Mr Pambagyo, thank you for the fantastic job that you have done.

Dear Executive Director, Members of the ICO, Vice-Chair Ambassador Iván Romero-Martínez, ICO staff, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for me, as the representative of the European Union, to take the responsibility of chairing the International Coffee Council during coffee year 2020/21. It is also a privilege as a representative of Ireland to serve all of you and the millions of coffee farmers, stakeholders and consumers in building a sustainable global coffee sector together.

Maybe a little bit on my background for those that don't know me; currently I'm the Agricultural Attaché to the Embassy of Ireland based in London, which is a new experience for me, after my last 20 years working for the Department of Agriculture, in Ireland.

I've spent the most recent 8 years involved in international climate change policy where one of the clear trends was a growing pressure from business' and consumers for sustainability and for climate action. So, as Chairman, I have a very good understanding of the problems faced, especially by producing countries in meeting evolving requirements of increasingly demanding consumers and the necessity of bridging the gap in understanding between both!

I have been learning a lot about Coffee production since my nomination – a fascinating topic! I myself am from farming background – I grew up on a small family farm of mixed beef and sheep in Kilkenny, Ireland, so I acutely appreciate the changes that are taking place globally which impact on small family farms on the ground. I understand very well how important it is that this Organization provides a safe place to represent the interest of coffee producers, stakeholders and consumers.

Coming from a small family farm in Ireland, I understand the diversity of farms and production systems and the critical importance of small producers in global value chains.

So to complete the personal intervention, Irish farmers may be far from coffee growers but we do have a unique Irish connection with our famous ‘Irish coffee’ to complement our Guinness☺

So returning to point of this agenda today,

The ICO, as the intergovernmental Organization on coffee, is a unique forum for both exporting and importing Members. The ICO enables widespread collaboration and engagement between all stakeholders, industry, academia, NGOs and consumers.

This Special Session is important for us to secure the future of this vital Organization. For this reason, I take my role as Chair very seriously and during my term of office I am fully committed to doing all I can within my power not only to realize the opportunities that exist for the global coffee sector, but also to foster a clear consensus on the concrete solutions to the challenges facing us today and in the future. This is why over 50 years ago it was recognised that there was a need for such a unique forum as the ICO to exist, bringing together exporting and importing countries, made up of, but also working for, the global coffee community. This must be the forum for discussions, for new ideas and for mobilising resources. Today, this Organization is more necessary than ever, especially with the covid-19 pandemic adding dramatic challenges to an already difficult situation for millions of farmers and their families. As a representative of the European Union, we are dedicated to building a sustainable and equitable coffee sector for all.

Let’s now go to our main item for today, the draft Administrative Budget for the financial year 2020/21. Let me reiterate what the outgoing Chair said, I will be firm in making sure that statements and comments are short and constructive and productive. We must make important decisions today that will impact future generations in our sector.