



**INTERNATIONAL
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**Statement by the Chair of
the International Coffee Council,
Mr John Muldowney, made at the opening
ceremony of the 129th Session
of the Council**

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

They say, where there is a will, there is a way. I believe that great things can be achieved if people work together. If you need proof, appreciate the scientific marvel and collective action that helped develop several vaccines against covid-19 in record time. So today, I ask us to work together, as together we are stronger. I ask us to work collectively to help us overcome some of the fallout from this difficult year and build a better, more equitable, prosperous and sustainable coffee sector.

Firstly, I'd like to say that given this hard year that we have all passed through, I hope that you and your families are healthy and safe and I send my condolences to anyone around the world, and to the coffee community in particular, who is suffering from covid-19 or who has lost a loved one or a friend to the pandemic. I would also like to express our solidarity with our Members who have been affected by other disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes creating an additional burden to overcome.

Secondly, I'd like to say that it is a great honour for me, as the representative of the European Union, to be chairing the 129th International Coffee Council. As a representative of Ireland and as someone who comes from a farming background, it is also a privilege to serve all of you and the millions of coffee farmers, stakeholders and consumers.

As the premier intergovernmental organization on coffee, the International Coffee Organization is a unique forum for both exporting and importing Members. We are at a crucial turning point and we need global cooperation, a sharing of knowledge and innovations.

As ICO analysis showed, the pandemic aggravated issues such as coffee price volatility, thus generating instability and uncertainty.

In these difficult times, we must build on the opportunities offered by the Coffee Public-Private Task Force that is already actively engaging industry and country leaders towards positive change. During this Council, we will hear an update on the progress of the Task Force.

Another major effort is the progress towards the revision of the International Coffee Agreement 2007. The Working Group on the Future of the International Coffee Agreement has met 12 times since its inception and all its Members are actively engaged in exploring proposals for change, with a view to make the ICO more efficient and better able to support the coffee sector, in tackling the challenges it faces. During this Council, we will hear a progress update from the Chair of the Working Group.

There are many other important items on the agenda and I take my role as Chair very seriously. 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. This International Coffee Council is a forum for discussions, for new ideas, for mobilizing resources and for advocating and bringing the attention of the world to the challenges and the opportunities offered by the coffee sector. A good example of this is the ICO's engagement with the G-20 Youth Summit, showcasing the coffee sector as a model for sustainability, innovation and employment to young people will be very beneficial for us all.

All of you are aware that we are working under exceptionally challenging circumstances in this virtual environment. Therefore, I request that your statements and comments be kept short and constructive, in order to foster a productive environment where innovative solutions can prosper. During this session, we must take important decisions that will impact the sector for years to come. I count on the support of all delegates in this difficult task.

Thank you.