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**Statement by the Chair of
the International Coffee Council,
Mr John Muldowney, made at the opening
ceremony of the 130th Session
of the Council**

Dear Vice-Chair Ambassador Iván Romero-Martínez, Executive Director, delegates to the ICO, ICO staff, ladies and gentlemen.

Only a few months have passed since we last met, yet so much has changed.

After months of struggle with the COVID19 pandemic, none of us could expect it to suddenly change and force us all to rethink our measures to combat its effects, while still dealing with the dramatic consequences this invisible enemy has had on our society, our economies and the lives of our loved ones.

If we think of the climatic events that have hit the planet far and wide, some of them severely impacting the coffee sector; or again, of the sudden political changes we have witnessed recently, we cannot but recognize how unpredictable the future can be.

It is in times of uncertainty however, that we value continuity and stability, and even more resilience and adaptiveness. The ICO has defended the interests of the coffee sector since 1963, always serving as a reference point for intergovernmental dialogue and a reliable source of information and knowledge for all the stakeholders of the coffee value chain.

Today we open the 130th session of the International Coffee Council and I truly believe that when looking back, we unanimously agree on the critical role the ICO has played and the remarkable results we have achieved together.

Now, looking ahead, it is essential we understand that continuity and evolution can coexist and work hand-in-hand. During the current coffee year, the ICO has again succeeded in strengthening its partnerships with the private sector and the civil society. Through events such as the CEO and Global Leaders Forum, the extensive work of the Coffee Public-Private Task Force and the participation in forums such as the G20 and the World Food Forum, the ICO has continuously promoted the coffee sector as a unique model for sustainability, inclusiveness, and innovation. At the same time, the ICO has worked hard with the sole goal of identifying and showcasing to the world the countless opportunities the coffee value chain is able to offer.

There is great potential for the sector to further grow, and develop into new, solid economic opportunities, with a focus on sustainable solutions and economic empowerment across the coffee value and supply chain. Together, we will work to ensure this becomes an even more tangible reality in the coming years.

Before we focus on the important decisions that will stem and be agreed upon in this Session of the Council, I make my own the words of a famous British writer who once said that “Mere change is not growth. Growth is the synthesis of change and continuity, and where there is no continuity there is no growth”.

On a personal level, the time has come for me to say goodbye to you, not only as the Chair of the Council but also as a delegate of the European Union to the ICO. I have recently been promoted and will be returning to Dublin in the next few days. At least I can count on drinking good coffee. According to a recent press article, Dublin is the second-most coffee-obsessed capital in the world!

Although I will no longer be with you, I will always cherish the memory of this year. My time as Chair has been a tremendous learning experience, which will serve me well in my future career. Above all, I value the interpersonal exchanges we have had; it has been an immense pleasure to get to know so many of you, even if only by virtual means.

I thank you all, distinguished delegates, for your valuable contributions and, above all, for your strong support.