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**Statement by the Chair of
the International Coffee Council,
H.E. Mr Iván Romero-Martínez, made at the
opening ceremony of the 132nd Session
of the Council**

Honourable delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the 132nd Session of the International Coffee Council. This is the second session I have the pleasure to chair this coffee year following the special meeting in which Members appointed by consensus the new Executive Director. Last February, we made history by electing the first female ED since the founding of the Organization in 1963. At this session, we gladly welcome another great achievement that is the result of the close collaboration among Members and reflects the spirit of cooperation that has always been one of the distinctive features of the ICO.

Today I have the honour of submitting to the attention of the Council the draft of the new International Coffee Agreement, which shall guide the Organization and its activities for the years to come. Following its creation in March 2019, the Working Group on the Future of the Agreement met twenty-eight times to review the Agreement 2007 and to identify the necessary tools the Organization needed in order to respond to the needs of coffee producers and consumers all over the world. The draft of the new Agreement strengthens the key role played by the Organization in the global coffee sector and reaffirms the ICO as the main forum for discussions on coffee-related issues at the public and private sector levels, thanks to the creation of mechanisms that will ensure all actors and stakeholders of the coffee value chain have a voice in the decision-making process.

The transformation of the Coffee Public-Private Task Force into a permanent working party and the creation of the Board of Affiliate Members bear witness to the recognized need to enhance dialogue and build new partnerships with the private sector and civil

society in order to jointly address common challenges such as climate change and the negative repercussion of the covid-19 pandemic, as well as to ensure the sustainable development of the coffee value chain and a living and prosperous income for all the farmers that are part of it. I am confident the new International Coffee Agreement will not only inaugurate a new era for the ICO but will also serve as a benchmark for other commodity boards.

For this, I would like to express my gratitude to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Working Group for their unmatched ability to effectively guide the activities of the WGFA; to all the Members who have steadily and patiently attended the meetings, carefully listened to different positions of all delegates, and promptly contributed in a constructive way to the drafting process of the Agreement. I personally thank the Executive Director, the Head of Operations and the Secretariat for their tireless support to the Working Group.

Honourable delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Although most of you are now ready to gradually return to normal and to life as we used to know it before the pandemic, during the last session of the Council we agreed to hold this meeting online.

On the one hand, this is a cause of deep sorrow as this will be the very last Council Session during which the outgoing Executive Director will be with us. If the past four years have been marked by countless successes despite the numerous challenges the Organization has faced, it is thanks to the capable leadership of Mr Sette, as well as to his solid knowledge of the coffee sector and of the Organization. On behalf of all Members, I would like to express my gratitude to José for having conducted in a capable and impeccable way the activities of the Organization as well as the Secretariat, and for always going out of his way in times of need to make sure the ICO succeeded in its endeavours. We would all have hoped to congratulate and say farewell to you in person, but I am sure our paths will certainly cross again soon.

On the other hand, this will hopefully be the last Council Session held exclusively online as we all get ready to resume in-person meetings whenever possible and economically feasible, starting with the last session of the Council of coffee year 2021/22, which will be held in Bogotá following the very generous offer made by Colombia during the 131st International Coffee Council.

In the spirit of brevity, I would like to conclude by thanking all of you in advance for your participation in the 132nd Session of the Council. I am confident today and tomorrow will be days of productive and constructive dialogue for the benefit of the global coffee sector.