



International Coffee Council
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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 133rd
Session of the Council**

Honourable delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to welcome all of you to the 133rd Session of the International Coffee Council. Almost sixty years have passed since the approval of the very first International Coffee Agreement which laid the foundations of our Organization, the International Coffee Organization.

Seven International Coffee Agreements have been approved since the beginning of our long-standing partnership and as we are all aware and confident, this special session of the Council will mark a new era for the ICO, its Members, the global coffee sector and for millions of coffee farmers whose work, every day, allow us to taste a wonderful coffee.

We are here today to show the world that the coffee sector is strong and united.

We are here today, producing and importing countries, together and committed to making the coffee value chain more sustainable, inclusive and resilient.

We are here today, eager to effectively engage with all the coffee stakeholders, from farmers to baristas, from businesses and the civil society to development partners and academia.

During this special session, we have an incredible opportunity: to consider the text of the new International Coffee Agreement, a new, innovative and effective way to work hand in hand with a common vision and objectives. A model for all commodity bodies.

Since the 1990s, the value of annual cross-border coffee exports in all forms (green, roasted, soluble) has more than quadrupled from USD 8.4 billion in 1991 to USD 35.6 billion in 2018 and continued growing. Importing countries are now exporting larger quantities of processed coffee; upgrading coffee production and trade in exporting Members has taken different paths, with significant differences between Arabica and Robusta producers, between commodity and specialty coffee production, and between traded green and value-added processed coffee. In the fifteen years that have followed the approval of the current ICA in 2007, coffee has recorded further significant changes in production, trade and consumption and we have witnessed over 31% increase in global production from 2007 to 2022.

Regarding consumption, producing countries consume far more coffee than thirty years ago; emerging countries - especially in Asia – moved from tea to high coffee consumption and drinking coffee has now become a modern way to socialize rather than just one to get a caffeine kick.

Moreover, we are witnessing unprecedented consumers' demand for quality, sustainability, transparency and fair prices throughout the coffee value chain and legislators and industry are now engaged in responding to their request: the Coffee Public-Private Task Force is the best example of how governments and industry can work together.

The International Coffee Agreement 2022, integrating the Task Force, would effectively reflect the evolution of the global coffee sector and respond to the recognized need to the collective action to address the challenges and to seize and boost the many opportunities the coffee market has to offer.

Let me also stress that the ICO went through a dramatic identity crisis between 2016-2020, during the lowest peak of green beans prices, worsened by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, these hard times have shown us all the importance of unity within the coffee sector and with this new Agreement we can look at the future of coffee and of the ICO with a renewed and optimist view.

To find solutions and respond to the many concerns arising, ICO Members, industry leaders and international development stakeholders recognized the key role of the Organization in coordinating and harmonizing discussions, as well as the added value of

addressing the challenges through the multilateral channel rather than in a scatter and ineffective way through country-to-country negotiations.

With a renewed spirit of cooperation, ICO Members initiated an intense exercise to review the current International Coffee Agreement, bringing new ideas and contributing with their knowledge and expertise to make the International Coffee Agreement more balanced and fairer. The ICO reaffirms itself as the centre of the “coffee diplomacy” and a unique forum to work together.

Such a remarkable achievement would have not been possible without the constant commitment of all delegates who patiently and actively attended the twenty-eight meetings of the Working Group on the Future of the Agreement since 2019 and all the consultations of the Drafting Group: I thank you all for your strong and very active participation.

As the Chair of the Council, and therefore on behalf of all ICO Members, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Working Group on the Future of the Agreement, Ms Stefanie Küng of Switzerland and Mr Mick Wheeler of Papua New Guinea, for their capable lead and for conducting so diligently and tirelessly all the activities of the Group. Finally, I would like to congratulate and thank the Secretariat for the tremendous work carried out and for doing anything within its reach to deliver timely and efficiently. A special thank you to our Executive Director Vanúzia Nogueira, former Executive Director José Sette and the Head of Operations Gerardo Patacconi, as well as Mirella and Veronica and the whole ICO team.

Today we have the opportunity to unravel a small number of pending issues mainly related to wording and drafting questions, and finalize our work so to move on with a renewed mandate and vision, strong and clear objectives and a solid and improved institutional mechanism.

We needed to streamline the governance structure of the Organization so as to ensure a leaner one.

We did not want to compromise on the intergovernmental nature of the ICO, and we did not, thanks to strong mechanisms included in the new ICA that will ensure that the decision-making process remains a prerogative of Governments, Members of the Organization.

We asked for a fairer distribution of contributions both between countries producing Arabica and Robusta coffee and between exporting and importing Members, and we identified an innovative and fairer system of votes and contributions.

We asked coffee industry leaders to take responsibility and work together with the public sector, and they promptly responded.

We wanted to make sure farmers and all coffee stakeholders had a voice and could actively engage with the ICO, and through the Board of Affiliate Members they will be welcome to share their views with us, the coffee Governments.

We asked importing countries that have a remarkable development drive to provide more resources to support the work of the Organization and they responded with higher allocation of funds and contributions.

Honourable delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

After almost three years of steady work, I can say without any hesitation that we have succeeded in finding a new path for the ICO that will help us make the coffee sector stronger and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

As you all know, I have been engaging with the ICO and its work for many years, as a delegate, and twice as Chair of the Council. I understand and see all the challenges and opportunities we have ahead. This new Agreement provides the Organization with the solid position it needed to effectively re-engage with those that wanted to play alone and invite them to join again the only true world coffee family, as well as to gladly welcome those few that are still not part of it.

This is a historic moment. So let us work hard today and tomorrow to smoothen any points that still need clarifications and to move forward towards the new future of the Organization.

Thank you all in advance for your participation in this special session of the International Coffee Council.