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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 134th Session
of the Council**

Honourable Ministers and fellow Ambassadors,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Brothers and sisters,

Finally, we have managed and we are so happy to be together again since we last met in London in September 2019: a heartfelt welcome to you all.

In the 36 months that have passed since we attended the 125th Session of the International Coffee Council, the world, the world of coffee and the International Coffee Organization have witnessed significant changes.

We lived through the most horrifying pandemic, people around the world were forced to endure long lockdowns and reduced mobility, with disruptions in demand and the supply chain. Our coffee plantations suffered as a result of devastating hurricanes, floods, frosts and droughts, price volatility increased, and now conflicts and speculations are driving up input costs and scarcity.

Despite the difficulties encountered, we should all be proud as farmers and exporting countries, traders and roasters, coffee workers and consumers: the coffee sector is strong and resilient and the prospects for the future are rosy, with consumption growing especially in emerging markets.

Moreover, we have engaged with the coffee industry and civil society and established the unique Coffee Public-Private Task Force, and we are holding the 4th coffee CEO and Global Leaders Forum, together with the 134th Council.

The ICO has for the first time a female executive director: a strong, knowledgeable and committed woman who will provide the ICO with new opportunities to grow and foster innovation. Welcome again, Vanusia!

We have also approved an historical and modernized new treaty, the new International Coffee Agreement 2022, which we will open for signature in a few minutes time, 60 years after the approval of the first ICA at the United Nations in New York.

The price of green coffee is high, bringing more prosperity to our farmers and reducing the living income gap, and providing more resources to increase sustainability, quality, productivity and incomes. I reiterate that we should all be proud and thank the great efforts by the ICO to modernize, reduce costs and effectively engage with all coffee stakeholders and development partners: Together we are stronger and we can address challenges and capitalize on opportunities, which is why we are all here today.

Again, a warm welcome to all Members and observers to this 134th Session of the Council. In the past at the opening of the Council we welcomed in particular those delegates attending the Council Session for the first time, but after three years of virtual Council sessions, it is quite difficult to keep track of those who have already been with us for a number of years and those who are newcomers, so may I also suggest that the ICO veterans help the new generation to make this Council session a success.

As is customary at the beginning of Council meetings, I would like you to join me and extend our condolences to Members who have experienced natural disasters this year.

The work of the Council cannot start until I extend my most sincere thanks to our Colombian brothers and sisters and the Colombian Coffee Federation, FNC, for hosting the Council here in Bogotá, the capital of and largest city in Colombia, a multicultural city where the past and present come together. Thank you Roberto, thank you Juan Esteban, thank you FNC, and thank you Colombia.

We have an important and comprehensive agenda for this Council Session that will be capitalizing on the hard work of the whole week. The work of the committees, the Task

Force and the CEO and Global Leaders Forum will enable us to explore and address the many challenges facing the coffee sector today, including supply and demand, logistics and rising costs of production and trade in all parts of the supply chain and changes in the sustainability regulatory framework. With regard to the latter, I have approached the European Union and the response was to welcome, before this Council, an ICO delegation to meet with the Commission for Environment. This unfortunately has had to be postponed due to health reasons on the part of the Commissioner.

As the Agenda is very full, I kindly request that delegates keep to the programme in order to avoid any meetings running over. As usual, any new documents will be available to download via the Council meetings section of the ICO website.

We will be opening the new agreement for signature, so all Members that have provided the ICO Depository with all the necessary documentation in compliance with the rules set forth in the Vienna Convention, will be invited to sign the agreement. Furthermore, all delegations are also kindly invited to update the Council on the status and timing for their countries to sign and ratify the ICA 2022.

The International Coffee Agreement 2022, integrating affiliate members and the Task Force transformed into a formal working party, overcomes the 50/50 budget constraints between exporting and importing countries and would effectively reflect the evolution of the global coffee sector and respond to the recognized need for collective action to address the challenges and to seize and boost the many opportunities the coffee market has to offer.

Honourable Ministers and fellow Ambassadors,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Brothers and sisters,

As Chair of the Council, and therefore on behalf of all ICO Members, considering that this will be my last of the four sessions I have held during my presidency, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all Members, the Executive Director, the Head of Operations and all ICO staff for their great and tireless work in spite of the limited resources available.

Thank you all in advance for your participation in the 134th Session of the International Coffee Council.