

Mission report

Subject	3 rd African Coffee Week
Place and dates	Ethiopia, Addis Ababa – 1-7 February 2026
ICO staff member	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanúsia Nogueira, Executive Director • Hannelore Beerlandt, Head of Operations • Veronica Ottelli, Secretariat and External Relations Officer
Purpose of travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold bilateral meetings with ICO Members from Africa to understand priorities, coordinate actions, and discuss progress regarding the procedures for membership of the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) 2022 • Participate in the 3rd African Coffee Week (Inter-African Coffee Organization (IACO) High-Level Policy Forum and Africa Fine Coffees Association (AFCA) Conference and Exhibition) • Hold bilateral meetings with IACO to discuss the draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the ICO and IACO-AU, as well as to align future joint activities • Plan activities with ICO partners • Take part in discussions and panels on mechanization possibilities, regenerative agriculture, access to finance and benefits for farmers, and EUDR, among others • Attend joint training session organized by the Specialty Coffee Association (SCA), International Trade Centre (ITC) and ICO on coffee quality
Five-Year Action Plan/Programme of Activities relevance	<p>Five-Year Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Goal II: Using the Organization’s convening power to provide a forum for dialogue and testing between and within the public and private sectors on coffee-related issues • Strategic Goal III: Facilitating the development of projects and promotion programmes through public-private partnerships <p>Results and Deliverables from the PoA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • II.A.2 Briefing members and facilitation of ICA signature/ratification • II.A.3 Consultations and advocacy to increase the engagement of ICO Members, private sector/other stakeholders in CPPTF and the realization of the Roadmap • II.A.6 Engaging IGOs, IFIs and NGOs in ICO events and participation in external events • II.A.7 Implementation of signed MoUs, and development, negotiation, signature of new MoUs and cooperation agreements • III.A.3 Advocacy for the promotion of cooperation with bilateral, regional & multilateral development agencies and donors with a focus on regulatory framework and sustainability and resilience of the coffee sector

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• III.A.5 Providing advisory services and cooperation with IGOs, private sector, civil society/academia• III.B.6 Outreach programmes, special events and information/promotional materials
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OVERVIEW

1. Bilateral meetings between the Executive Director and African Members

The Executive Director, together with the Secretariat and External Relations Officer—and, at times, the Head of Operations—engaged in a series of targeted bilateral meetings with the following African Members: Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Togo.

Discussions focused on understanding national priorities and needs, exploring how ICO activities could align with them, and advancing dialogue on the signature and ratification of the ICA 2022, including identifying next steps to accelerate the process. Representatives from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) also joined some of the meetings with countries engaged in the ACT (Advancing Climate-Resilience and Transformation in African Coffee) Programme.

2. 3rd African Coffee Week and IACO's High-Level Policy Forum

Organized by IACO in collaboration with UNIDO, the Forum was held under the theme “Advancing Climate Resilience and the Transformation of the African Coffee Sector”. The Executive Director spoke at the opening session, highlighting Africa’s growing production and export capacity and its increasing market share in emerging markets such as China.

Discussions addressed key priorities for the sector’s transformation and were structured around five panels on the themes outlined below:

- (a) Panel 1: Social inclusion and sustainable livelihoods. This panel highlighted the need to place farmers, especially women and youths, at the centre of sector development, with inclusive business models, access to finance, decent work and skill development as drivers of resilience.
- (b) Panel 2: Value addition and industrial transformation. It was noted that Africa still exports most of its coffee as green beans, capturing limited global value. The panellists highlighted policies and investments to expand local processing, roasting, branding and SME participation, including opportunities within the African Continental Free Trade Area.

- (c) Panel 3: Climate resilience. This panel addressed climate-smart production, agroforestry, resilient varieties, early warning systems and access to climate finance, with a focus on scaling up solutions beyond pilot initiatives.
- (d) Panel 4: Research, innovation and knowledge sharing. Participants stressed the need to integrate scientific research, data and digital tools into policymaking, alongside regional collaboration and South–South exchange to boost productivity and quality.
- (e) Panel 5: Market access and compliance with international standards. Panellists focused in particular on the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), noting the role of traceability, certification, digital solutions, and harmonized African standards in turning compliance into a competitive advantage.

The Forum concluded with the official launch of the African Coffee Sustainability Standards, led by the African Organisation for Standardisation (ARSO), marking an important milestone in strengthening market access and regulatory alignment for African coffee producers.

3. The AFCA Conference and Exhibition

The Executive Director spoke at the opening of the AFCA Conference and the Rainforest Alliance Sustainability Day. The event included a wide range of case studies, action research and discussions on regenerative agriculture and stump management in practice, and focused on ways to increase benefits for farmers and scale these approaches.

A key milestone was the launch of the African Learning Community on the EUDR, led by AFCA, with support from the German Agency for International Cooperation (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH - GIZ*), the Committee on Sustainability Assessment (COSA) and the ICO. The Executive Director delivered the opening remarks and a keynote address. Sessions highlighted significant progress on EUDR preparedness, including public-private cooperation, and provided a platform for sharing “second generation” lessons learned.

4. SCA-ITC-ICO training on coffee quality

Alongside the conference, a training session on quality coffee was organized by SCA, ITC and ICO. The predominantly young participants learned how to assess coffee quality, understand the market for quality coffee, and approach traders with high-quality beans. The session was conducted by an Ethiopian trainer, certified by the SCA, and attended and closed by the ICO's Head of Operations.

5. Other bilateral meetings:

The ICO team also held meetings with the following Members and partners (in alphabetical order): AFCA, Café Africa, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture

(CIAT), COSA, European Forest Institute (EFI), European Union delegation to the African Union, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Global Coffee Platform (GCP), GIZ, Here We Growth, IACO, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Indonesia (Ministry of Agriculture), ITC, JDE Peet's, Kenya Coffee Platform (KCP), Preferred by Nature, Rikolto, Sustainable Food Lab, Technoserve, Uganda Coffee Development Authority (UCDA), UNIDO, Vocal A, World Bank.

CONCLUSIONS/MAIN OUTCOMES

1. Engagements with ICO Members proved highly productive, fostering mutual understanding and collaboration. Members were encouraged to complete the necessary procedures for membership of the ICA 2022 in order to accelerate its entry into force.
2. The launch of the African Coffee Sustainability Standard marked a significant milestone, strengthening the ability of African coffee producers to improve market access, demonstrate compliance, and align with global sustainability expectations.
3. The training session on coffee quality successfully engaged a predominantly young audience through a practical, hands-on approach. Plans are underway to expand the programme to cooperatives, local traders, and other key stakeholders in order to further strengthen capacity across the value chain.
4. The draft MoU with IACO was further refined, with several concrete actions scheduled for immediate implementation, reinforcing regional cooperation and sector coordination.
5. Regenerative agriculture and targeted financial mechanisms to de-risk farmers and support the scaling of sustainable practices emerged as central priorities for long-term sector resilience.
6. The EUDR is increasingly seen as an opportunity to drive improvements in the management of the coffee value chain and natural resources.

AOB

N/A



