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years



INTERNATIONAL  
COFFEE  
ORGANIZATION

ICC 111-11

10 September 2013  
Original: Spanish

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International Coffee Council  
111<sup>th</sup> Session  
9 – 12 September 2013  
Belo Horizonte, Brazil

**Statement by the Representative of  
the European Union to the 111<sup>th</sup> Session  
of the International Coffee Council  
on 9 September 2013**

Mr Chairman,  
Executive Director,

Distinguished representatives of ICO Member countries, representatives of the private sector and civil society,  
Distinguished guests,

There is an old saying that sharing a cup of coffee ensures a friendship lasting 40 years. Today we can all be proud of the journey we have shared during the last 50 years. The International Coffee Organization has proved itself able to bring together so many members, so many representatives of the coffee world from both producing and consuming countries from all continents to provide a forum for sincere and productive dialogue and to promote international cooperation on one of the most important commodities in international trade.

Europe's relationship with coffee goes back a very long way. In 1686 the Café Procope opened in Paris, in 1720 the Florian in Venice, the Hoppe in Amsterdam in 1670 and Diodato and Kulczycki opened their cafés in Vienna between 1683 and 1685. Some of these cafés are still open today and bear witness to this remarkable story, this privileged relationship between our continent and the beverage that captivated and continues to captivate both elites and ordinary people.

The European Union recognizes that the cooperation developed over these 50 years and the links forged between participants in the coffee sector are very precious. We are convinced that this exemplary cooperation, achieved by the indispensable participation of the private sector and civil society, should continue and should be strengthened for the benefit of all participants in the coffee production chain.

Coffee is a major economic resource and its importance in the global economy is well recognized. According to estimates, coffee is grown in more than 10,000 million hectares in four continents and some 60 countries. An enormous number of people work in the farming and production of coffee, ensuring the preservation of this heritage. The production, processing, transport and marketing of coffee provide employment for millions of people throughout the world.

Europe is the world's biggest consumer, with a very high rate of consumption, which, in the case of Finland, can be more than 10 kg per capita a year. As the world's leading consumer, our market has gradually developed and has become diversified through the variety of its different forms of consumption. This is why the European Union emphasizes and reiterates its commitment to maintaining quality and variety in world coffee supply.

We realize that the coffee sector has not overcome all the risks and challenges it faces. The weaknesses that still remain require our special support and will be the object of consideration in meetings of the Council and Committees during the course of this week. To mention only one the subjects for consideration during this Session: we will be paying special attention to the pests and diseases that threaten coffee production in some countries and the employment of thousands of people. I am referring in particular to the coffee rust, the disease that is spreading in Central America. We are convinced that exchanging experiences and good practices, strengthening research and developing warning systems are priorities in overcoming such epidemics at national and regional levels and that we must take concerted action as soon as possible.

The European Union and its member States have always participated actively in the tasks of the Organization and have followed with interest the evolution of the coffee sector. Sustainable development in the sector, both in production and marketing, has our total support. We hope to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Organization, in particular those relating to poverty reduction.

I believe that we can affirm without fear of contradiction, that we have together strengthened the ICO as the leading organization and basic pillar of the coffee sector at world level. Despite all the storms and profound changes that have affected the sector, together we have been able to broaden and strengthen the Organization. This is why I wish to reiterate my congratulations to all of us, to the Executive Director and all members of the Secretariat for all the work they have carried out during the 50 years of the Organization's existence, which we are celebrating here in Belo Horizonte.

In the context of strengthening and broadening the Organization, EXPO 2015 in Milan is dedicating a special place to coffee. EXPO, dedicated to the theme of 'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life' will highlight tradition, creativity and innovation in the food sector. This is why we feel that EXPO 2015 will be an ideal place to hold the Fourth World Coffee Conference, which is also programmed for 2015.

Mr Chairman,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to conclude by paraphrasing Giuseppe Verdi who said that coffee "is a balm to both body and spirit". We hope that for at least the next 50 years the International Coffee Organization will be a balm to the coffee sector throughout the world.

Thank you.