



**United Nations General Assembly | Sixth Committee**

**Observer status for the International Coffee Organization  
in the General Assembly  
(Agenda item 179)**

15 October 2024

*(check against delivery)*

Madam/Mister Chair and Distinguished Delegates,

[I thank you for your stewardship of the debates in this Committee. I speak in my capacity as coordinator of the draft resolution on the granting of observer status at the General Assembly for the International Coffee Organization.]

It is believed that coffee was originally grown at the Ethiopian plateau and in Yemen and later it was cultivated and traded on the Arabian Peninsula. From there, qahwah started its cosmopolitan journey to spread worldwide.

In Brazil, coffee crops were introduced in the 1800s and, since then, it became deeply intertwined with our country's history. Its production system helped to shape the Brazilian economic,

social and political landscape, as well as its culture. More recently, coffee is also becoming an integral part of our efforts to ensure more sustainable and inclusive agrifood systems, and to add value to our national production, hence reducing poverty, creating better jobs and generating additional export revenue.

The impact of coffee, however, cannot be limited to its main producers and importers. According to a study by S&P, coffee is commercially produced in more than 50 countries and the world drinks over 3 billion cups a day. It generates around \$20 billion in exports a year, with an annual revenue estimated to exceed \$200 billion. Globally, at least 100 million families depend on coffee for their living.

At the United Nations, it is a fixture, a reliable companion and a savory elixir for overcoming stumbling blocks in negotiations. One cannot overestimate its importance. How many deals were closed over coffee at the Delegates Lounge? How many decisive talks did take place at the UN couloirs under its beneficial influence? How many nights reading long, technical UN reports and writing speeches were fueled by it? How many démarches owe their success to its helping hand? Above all, how many important moments of fraternity, comity and understanding did it foster?

It is no surprise, then, that the International Coffee Organization was established in 1963 under the aegis of the United Nations. Conversely, it is surprising that the Organization has not been invited yet to participate in the sessions of work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer.

I am here today in a mission to help remedy this glaring omission by introducing a draft resolution by which the General Assembly will grant observer status to the ICO. We thank the Secretary-General for complying with Brazil's request for this topic to be included in the agenda of the General Assembly in its 79th session.

We are also grateful to the other co-authors of the draft resolution we have put forward, Angola, Colombia, Germany, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Italy, Peru, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and Viet Nam, as well as to its additional co-sponsor, so far Bolivia, Hungary and the Russian Federation, for acknowledging the crucial role the ICO plays in addressing the challenges facing the global coffee sector. By its action, not only does it contribute to the soundness of the world economy, but it also fosters sustainable development, poverty reduction, and fair trade and labour practices.

Madam/Mister Chair and Distinguished Delegates,

We are aware that this is a legal committee, whose judicious delegates will closely look into the conformity of the proposal with the UN rules. We are also mindful that some Member States have been voicing concerns over what they see as the risk of gradual erosion of the intergovernmental character of the United Nations.

UN General Assembly Decision 49/426 is the main legal instrument setting out requirements for the granting of observer status at the General Assembly. Basically, it confines observer status to States and intergovernmental organizations whose activities cover matters of interest to the Assembly.

First, it is beyond a shadow of doubt that the ICO is an organization of an intergovernmental character.

As the only intergovernmental organization dedicated to coffee, the ICO brings together the Governments of exporting and importing countries responsible for 93 per cent of world coffee production and 63 per cent of world consumption. It is composed by 42 exporting members and 7 importing members, one of which, the European Union, represents 27 Member States.

The intergovernmental nature of the ICO is also clear from the interpretation of articles 3 to 6 of the International Coffee Agreement of 1962, which laid the foundations of the organization. Those provisions limit the membership of the ICO to the contracting parties or groups of contracting parties, all of them Member States.

Second, it is indisputable that the International Coffee Organization's activities cover matters of interest to the General Assembly. This is illustrated by its regular participation in multilateral activities related to agriculture, commodities and sustainable development. Its activities are inextricably linked to the UN agenda, particularly with regard to sustainable development. Efficient, inclusive and sustainable coffee supply chains can contribute to the SDGs 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 12 and 15, among others.

Furthermore, we must bear in mind article 21 of the 1962 International Coffee Agreement, on the cooperation between the ICO and the United Nations and its specialized agencies and with other appropriate intergovernmental organizations. These organizations and agencies may even be invited to attend meetings of the ICO's Council.

Mr. President,

There is no denying that the ICO meets the formal and substantial criteria to become an observer at the General Assembly.

Therefore, I kindly request the support of all the UN membership for the draft resolution tabled to this end. The corresponding L document has been already uploaded at the e-Delegate+ website and is open for co-sponsorship at the Sixth Committee e-sponsorship.

The Sixth Committee is scheduled to consider the draft resolution on November 8. It has one paragraph at the preamble, on the intent to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the ICO; and two operative paragraphs, one with an invitation for the ICO to participate in the General Assembly as an observer, and another with a request for the Secretary-General to ensure its implementation.

We look forward to its adoption by consensus without a vote.

Thank you for your attention.