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COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

Fortieth Session

Rome, Italy, 7-11 October 2013

**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FUND
FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Excellencies,
Honourable Delegates,
Colleagues,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is always heartening when we learn that there are fewer hungry people in the world. And last week's report on the State of Food Insecurity in the World says just that. Today, an extra 36 million people are getting sufficient food to meet their dietary needs.

This is good news. We are getting closer to a world without hunger. It is within our grasp. But we are not there yet. Not when 842 million children, women and men are under-nourished; when 842 million people are getting far too little food to lead healthy and productive lives.

It is telling that a full 97 per cent of the world's under-nourished people live in developing countries. Extreme hunger is almost exclusively a developing country issue, and is particularly pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa, where an estimated 25 per cent of the population goes hungry.

It is also a rural issue, because poverty and hunger go hand-in-hand, and poverty runs deepest through rural areas. The abject poverty that I witnessed decades ago as a young scientist working in Africa and Asia still persists.

Yet I have also seen the impact that well-planned, country-led development can have.

Just last month in China, I met a young man with an MBA who had returned to his village because, thanks to an IFAD-supported project, there were more business opportunities in his village than in the city. Today, he and his wife run a cooperative that already has 12,000 chickens – and he expects to have 50,000 next year.

Just a few days ago, I was in the Niger Delta in Nigeria where youth have turned fish farming into a vibrant money-making business through IFAD projects. IFAD projects have turned what was a "no go zone" due to violence into a zone of peace where the economy can now thrive.

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We can end hunger. We are moving in the right direction, and are closer to the MDG target of halving the proportion of people living in hunger. By working together, we can meet that target. And by stepping up our efforts, we should even be able to surpass it and halve not just the proportion but the number of people living in hunger. But we need to act decisively, we need to act in unison, and we need to act now.

The CFS is well positioned to help orchestrate the final push to meet the first MDG. This is the only global forum that brings together the full range of stakeholders in food security. These include national governments to farmers' organisations, civil society, the private sector, international financial institutions, technical agencies and – of course – the Rome-based United Nations agencies.

We note with pleasure the progress the CFS has made in the past year. Not only is the CFS reaching its reform objectives, but the support for its work is growing, as witnessed by the number of people in the room today. In the run-up to this week, there has been wide-ranging participation in everything from working groups to the preparation of documents.

The CFS is also gaining recognition on the international stage – among governments, technical agencies, civil society and the private sector as an essential platform for collective efforts to create a food secure world.

You have a packed, but well-conceived agenda for the coming week. I would like to highlight the policy round tables – one on biofuels and one on smallholder agriculture – and the Special Event on managing natural resources for food security in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The topic of biofuels is one that event organisers tend to shy away from, because it is a controversial area where feelings can run strong. But biofuels are as much about food and rural development as they are about energy. And with biofuel production having increased five-fold in the past decade, it is an area we cannot afford to ignore.

Moreover, managing natural resources is particularly relevant, given the recent IPCC report indicating that global warming is unequivocal, and extremely likely caused by human activity; and ahead of next month's COP19 meeting in Poland.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear colleagues,

At IFAD we care tremendously about these issues. We are dedicated to creating the conditions for poor rural women and men to lift themselves, and their families, out of poverty and hunger. Doing so means giving priority to gender, environment, climate change, food security and nutrition, as IFAD has been doing for many years now.

Over the years, IFAD has helped more than 400 million poor rural people realize their potential. Today we support 253 projects in 96 countries across continents, worth more than \$12 billion. The projects are designed to enable poor rural people to grow and sell more food, increase their incomes, strengthen their food security and improve their livelihoods.

We know that the CFS shares our goals, and I am happy to report that just a few weeks ago I raised with our Executive Board the fact that we would significantly increase IFAD's contribution to the CFS. This is a testament to the important work that the CFS needs to carry out.

Let us not forget that rural areas are a key element of any new development agenda and global food security. Let us not forget that investing in smallholder agriculture is the most cost effective way for developing countries to tackle poverty and hunger. This is why smallholders are at the heart of what IFAD does, and at the heart of the work of the CFS.

We at IFAD stand ready to do our part, together with our partners here at the CFS.

I wish you a productive week.

Thank you.