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**54th Session of The Commission on
Population and Development**
***Population, Food Security and Nutrition,
and Sustainable Development***

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Remarks by Mr. Gilbert Houngbo

President

International Fund for Agricultural Development
(IFAD)

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion on the nexus between Population, Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Development.
2. I would like to call attention to the women, children and men of the rural world.
3. They make up around 3.4 billion of the world's citizens but a disproportionate number of the poor and the hungry.
4. Around 80 per cent of the world's poorest population and most of the world's chronically hungry live in the rural areas of developing countries. Most depend on small-scale agriculture.
5. Small-scale family farmers are the backbone of food supply across all low- and middle-income countries¹. They produce around half the world's food calories on 30 per cent of its land².
6. Rural people, their economic activities, and the food systems we all depend on, are especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Investment in agriculture not only creates jobs on the farm, it can help farmers adapt to

¹ Taken from overview of new RDR

² https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/42207793/foodsystems_paper.pdf/6269996c-1b08-a824-4785-e0dc4d13cef9

climate change and generates employment in trades and activities – such as food processing, transportation and marketing. The result is more diversified and vibrant rural economies, with more resilient populations.

7. Achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will depend on creating healthier, more inclusive, resilient, fair and sustainable food systems.
8. With this in mind, I would like to propose three key considerations for sustainable development.
9. **Firstly, consider that most rural people contribute,** in some way, **to meeting global food demand.** It is imperative that food systems create decent livelihoods – especially for small-scale farmers, and those involved in food processing, storage and marketing.
10. Among the important aspects to consider are: financial inclusion of poor rural people, access to technologies, business development services and training on new sustainable agricultural practices.
11. **Secondly, we must recognise the contribution of women** to food systems, and level the playing field.
12. On virtually every development indicator – including poverty, hunger, and education -- rural women fare worse than rural men.

13. To ensure no-one is left behind, we must champion women's empowerment and ensure rural women have equal access to resources and financing, and rights to their land. We must also address the marginalization of groups indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities.
14. And **thirdly, we must look to the future and invest in rural youth.** Nearly 1 billion of the world's 1.2 billion youth aged 15-24 live in developing countries³. ***And two-thirds of these young women and men live in rural areas with high agricultural potential.***
15. Too often, young people are marginalized and excluded from decent employment and positions of authority and responsibility.
16. In Africa, where more than half the population is rural, agriculture is expected to remain the biggest source of jobs for the foreseeable future.
17. Rural economies that offer a range of employment options can provide opportunities for the entrepreneurial energy of youth, enabling them to be an engine of growth while also contributing to better food security and nutrition.

Ladies and gentlemen,

³ RDR 2019

18. Let me conclude by thanking the Commission for your leadership in taking forward the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). And specifically, for dedicating this annual session to discussions linking population with Food Security and Nutrition, and Sustainable Development.
19. I wish you all fruitful deliberations in the coming days.
20. Thank you.