

Multistakeholder Dialogue on Implementing Sustainable Development

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Statement by
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Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues and friends,

IFAD was very pleased with the outcome of CSD-17, particularly its affirmation of the central role of smallholder farmers – especially women farmers – in safeguarding natural resources and ensuring global food security. We welcome this Multistakeholder Dialogue as a constructive effort to sustain the collaboration and shared learning that were generated by CSD 16 and 17.

The timing of CSD-17 could not have been more fortuitous, coming in the midst of efforts by the global community to formulate an effective response to the burgeoning food security crisis. As such, the actions and insights that emerged from the CSD deliberations have helped to reinforce and support these efforts. Similarly, its strong call to integrate climate change and agriculture came at a moment when world attention was sharply focused on climate change negotiations.

CSD-17's cluster of issues is intimately related to IFAD's core mission of enabling rural poor people to overcome poverty. Many of the CSD-

17 agreements support IFAD's approach to its mission and the work we are doing with borrowing countries and development partners.

I would like to take the opportunity of today's dialogue to share recent actions by IFAD in three areas that are central to the CSD-17 outcome: biofuel development and land issues, rural finance and market access, and the empowerment of rural women.

Biofuel Development and Land Issues

CSD called for actions to ensure environmental sustainability in rural areas. It also highlighted the need for equitable access to land and clear and secure land tenure. In this area, IFAD has been identifying policy options, risk mitigation strategies, and alternative business models for pro-poor bio-fuel production.

We are working in the Mekong subregion with the Asian Development Bank, for example, to link smallholder growers of cassava to agroindustrial processors in Cambodia, the Lao PDR, and Vietnam. In Brazil, we are supporting a pilot test of innovative technologies and management schemes for small rural producer organizations to grow and process castor beans into crude oil for the country's bio-diesel market.

In the area of land tenure security, we are piloting new approaches to establishing partnerships between investors and local communities in agriculture and livestock development. At the global level, we are supporting the FAO-led development of voluntary guidelines for the governance of land and other natural resources. These guidelines will help States, civil society organizations and the private sector to

improve decision making on land tenure as an important element of alleviating hunger and poverty, supporting national and local economic development, and reforming public administration.

Rural Finance and Market Access

CSD recognized the need to develop sustainable agricultural value chains and improve the access of farmers and rural entrepreneurs to markets. In this area, IFAD is seeking strategic linkages with the private sector, foundations, and the public sector for business development opportunities for smallholder farmer and rural small-scale enterprises. New agricultural investment funds -- in particular, equity funds and microfinance investment vehicles – are playing an increasingly important role in agricultural development, contributing to growth, productivity increases, and poverty reduction.

IFAD is working with others to establish the **African Agriculture Equity Fund (AAF)**. The Fund will provide equity financing for priority investments in production and distribution in specific food value chains, including cereals, livestock, dairy, fruit and vegetables, and edible oils, as well as rural credit institutions and agricultural insurance. IFAD has mobilized grant financing for a Technical Advisory Facility with the African Agriculture Fund. These resources will help strengthen the capacity of smallholder farmers, cooperatives and poor rural workers in Africa, including women and youth, to better ensure that their farms and small-scale agricultural businesses can qualify for this new equity financing.

The Empowerment of Rural Women

Finally, to strengthen IFAD's contribution to equality, increased prosperity, and the enhanced well-being of rural women, we have made a new commitment to strengthen women's leadership and decision-making influence in agriculture and natural resource management at all levels.

IFAD has found that the absence of the voice of rural women in national and global policy processes reflects their weak presence in the leadership of rural organizations. While these organizations may have many women as members, there are generally few in leadership positions – and fewer as one moves from local to regional to national and global levels. The result is a dramatic disconnect between rural women's voice and decision-making role and their enormous contribution to agricultural marketing, production, and livelihoods.

As part of its renewed efforts in this area, IFAD will hold a Women's Leadership Workshop later this month to discuss how we can work with farmers' organizations to promote the role and leadership of women in rural organizations. The workshop will try to identify the main obstacles women face in organizations that include both men and women members and the difficulties that prevent them from assuming more influential and leadership roles. The conclusions will provide the basis of recommendations to IFAD's biennial Farmers' Forum, which convenes immediately following the workshop.

In these and countless other ways, IFAD is undertaking actions that reflect agreements reached in CSD-17. We look forward to future and

ongoing opportunities to continue this kind of dialogue and shared learning.