

## **Introductory Remarks by Mr Luciano Lavizzari**

**Joint Africa Evaluation, 29 September 2009, Bamako**

**Hon. Minister of Agriculture of Mali;  
Hon. Deputy Minister of Agriculture of Ghana;  
Hon State Minister of Agriculture of Burkina Faso;  
Secretary General of the Ministry of Agriculture of Senegal;  
Representative from the Minister of Agriculture of Mozambique;  
Representatives of AGRA, FARA, FRAO and ROPPA; and  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**First of all, I would like to warmly welcome you all to this event and thank you for making an effort of being here with us today. Your participation is indeed important and we are particularly keen to hear your views and insights on the draft evaluation report, prepared jointly by the evaluation offices of IFAD and AfDB on the two organisations' policies and operations in agriculture and rural development in Africa.**

**Next, I would like to express deep appreciation to the Government of Mali for graciously agreeing to host this event. In particular, I pay tribute to the Minister of Agriculture and his staff for taking the lead and for devoting much of their precious time to ensure that all arrangements were put in place in a timely manner. We from IFAD, but I am sure I also speak on behalf of my colleagues in the AfDB, are extremely pleased to be here in Bamako for this consultation and have the opportunity to interact with all of you.**

**This is a critical evaluation, which aims overall to contribute to further strengthening the efforts of African governments in agriculture and rural development sector. After the coffee break my colleague Colin Kirk and I, will take you through a presentation of this evaluation and its findings. At this stage, and as an introduction to the consultation, I would like to share with you a few reflections from the evaluation:**

- 1. The evaluation found that there is a wind of change in Africa and the continent is on the move. This is manifested by a better investment climate, greater**

economic stability, more democracy, and respectable rates of economic growth in a number of countries. Major progress has in fact been achieved in the past 15 years or so. The joint evaluation therefore concludes that the pessimism that characterized prior assessments of Africa's agriculture and rural development prospects is no longer justified.

2. The evaluation notes that agriculture truly matters as an engine for economic growth and poverty reduction in the continent. The agriculture sector of Africa has great potential, thanks to its rich natural resources and the resilience and dynamism of its small holder farmers and women, who constitute the majority of the rural population. It is time to realize that agriculture has not only the potential to lift millions of people out of poverty. It can also ensure them well being and wealth.

3. However, it is of paramount importance to recall that that agricultural growth has mainly occurred in those countries where Governments have taken charge of their economic destinies and reformed their approach to economic management. That is in countries which have adopted conducive policies and developed effective institutions to implement them. This is challenging, we know, but it is also good to remember, because it shows that successes in a number of countries can be replicable in others.

4. However let us both be realistic and clear: there is no room for complacency because in general progress and results on the ground in achieving agriculture development and tackling poverty have only been moderately satisfactory in the past. The evaluation calls for the need to significantly increase the quantity and quality of public expenditure to agriculture in the continent. Above all, it underlines the importance of filling the policy, institutional and leadership gap prevailing in the agriculture and rural sector in many countries, so that governments are endowed with the skills needed to formulate and implement effective policies and programmes in the agriculture and rural sector.

5. Finally the evaluation recognizing the fundamental importance of country ownership, including in particular the performance of government itself as the

**most critical ingredient for success in agriculture and rural development. Yes it will need donors to significantly increase the level and quantity of resources they provide to African agriculture. And, yes we need to find ways and means to address the unfavourable and unequally trade regime facing the continent. Even if no improvements are achieved on these two fronts in the short run, there is still a lot that governments can do to promote agriculture and rural development, But above all and most importantly we need countries that show the political will to take charge of their economic and agricultural destinies.**

**In closing, as mentioned before, we are here to listen to you and benefit from your inputs and perspectives, as we move towards finalising the evaluation report. I look forward to a rich and fruitful debate.**

**Thank you.**