

Opening Remarks by Her Excellency the Vice President and Minister of Women's Affairs

Mr Chairman

The Hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs

The Hon. Minister of Agriculture,

Fellow Ministers present,

UN Resident Coordinator,

The UNDP Resident Rep,

The FAO Rep,

The Permanent Secretaries present

The Director of IFAD's West and Central Africa Division, Programme

Management Department

The Deputy Director, Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) of IFAD

The IFAD Country Programme Manager,

The Projects Coordinator, Central Projects Coordinating Unit,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished guests, ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of The President of the Republic of The Gambia, Sheik Professor Dr. Alhagie Yahya AJJ Jammeh, BABILI MANSA, it gives me great pleasure indeed to welcome you all to the Validation Workshop of the Country Programme Evaluation Report conducted by the IFAD Independent Office of Evaluation. I would like to recognize the presence and extend a special welcome to our guests from IFAD who are here not only to grace the occasion but also to provide insight to the Project.

Mr. Chairman

The cooperation between IFAD and the Government of The Gambia dates back to 1982 and involve loans, grants and non-lending activities, including knowledge management, policy dialogue and partnership building. I am reliably informed that IFAD has supported ten projects and programmes for a total project cost of US\$196.8 million. Out of this, the amount of IFAD lending corresponded to US\$73.1 million; other contributions to the portfolio were provided by the Fund in the form of regional grants. Counterpart contribution by the Gambia Government and project

beneficiaries, accounted for US\$24.1 million and co-financing amounted to US\$99.5 million. The African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank – International Development Association (IDA) group, the Islamic Development Bank, the World Food Programme (WFP), and the Governments of the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Spain have participated in IFAD funded projects since the beginning of the IFAD's operations in the country.

Mr.Chairman

The Importance of the IFAD Country Program Evaluation cannot be overemphasized.

The Gambia's development agenda is enshrined in the Country's *Vision 2020* which seeks to transform "the Gambia into a dynamic middle income country, socially, economically and scientifically over a 25 year period". In 2013 the Government launched the "*Vision 2016 Agenda*", with the objective of stimulating food crop production and making the country food self-sufficient through the enhancement of the overall rice value chain and oppose the negative effects of Ebola and food price volatility. The Gambia Government has in place proactive policies to support the realization of her development visions. The **National Youth Policy**, approved in 2009, has priority areas that encompass youth employment issues, sustainable livelihoods development, poverty reduction and economic empowerment and pursues ad hoc incentives like loans and training for effective use of land by rural young people. The **Gambia National Women Empowerment and Gender Policy 2010-2012** was also approved in 2009 and supports the national development through inclusive participation and gender equity. These initiatives are in line with IFAD's focus on the grassroots levels in rural development, with special attention for the socio-economic development and empowerment of women and youth; increased grassroots participation and an appreciation of indigenous knowledge.

Mr. Chairman

I understand that the objectives of IFAD's Country Programme Evaluation (CPE) are to:

(a) Assess the performance and impact of IFAD-supported operations in the country; and

(b) Generate a series of findings and recommendations that serves as building blocks for the future cooperation between IFAD and the Government. The CPE should also inform the future Country Strategy and Opportunities Programme (COSOP) for The Gambia.

CPE traditionally cover IFAD operations over a period of approximately ten years, taking into account evolving objectives of the portfolio and change in priorities of Government. This particular evaluation covers IFAD cooperation between 2004 and

2014 and takes account of evolving approaches as well as assessing the results and impact of IFAD-supported operations since the COSOP approval. The evaluation assessed IFAD's contribution to rural development and rural poverty reduction in The Gambia, identifying aspects of the cooperation to be strengthened as well as the necessary conditions to ensure the sustainability of results.

Mr. Chairman

The relevance to national development objectives I confess cannot be overemphasized.

It is gratifying to note that the outcome of the IFAD CPE will contribute meaningfully to the national development objectives of Government, mainly by enhancing agriculture and rural development policies and the needs of the poor. The evaluation enhances effectiveness, efficiency and rural poverty impact assessments of household income and assets, human and social capital and empowerment, food security and agricultural productivity, natural resources and environment, and institutions and policies. The evaluation will also impact on the sustainability of development interventions, assessing whether benefits of projects are likely to continue after the completion of IFAD assistance, including prospects for innovation, replication and scaling up; gender equality and women empowerment with emphasis on the degree of gender mainstreaming achieved, including the relevance of the approach in view of women's needs in the country context, and the specific results in terms of empowerment and benefits.

Mr. Chairman

In essence, the CPE is fully supportive of the national development blue print Vision 2020 Incorporated., Vision 2016, the PAGE and related policies and strategic sector development policies and programmes, including the GNAIP, these blueprints are the most important plan of action for the promotion of agricultural development in The Gambia. as required under the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). IFAD's support to the achievement of the GNAIP objective of transforming the agricultural and natural resource sector from subsistence to commercial production, with a focus on smallholders, is invaluable.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In light of the above, therefore the task ahead of you today is to critically review this report and provide candid and genuine suggestions that will not only enrich but ensure that we finally develop document that meets international standards.

I have no doubt that your ability to contribute meaningfully to this process will lead to a concise report. It is my conviction that participants will work hard to effectively review the report with a view to identifying major areas for closer collaboration between the Gambia Government and IFAD as a means for the sustainable development of the country in general and the Agriculture sector in particular. Therefore I urge you all to take the workshop seriously and interact as much as possible in order achieve the objectives of the CPE.

Finally, I wish to register on behalf of the Gambia Government's sincere gratitude to IFAD for its consistent support to the country's development efforts.

On this note I wish to declare the IFAD CPE Workshop 2015, opened.