

The Gambia: IFAD Country Programme Evaluation national workshop, Kairaba Hotel, Banjul

Statement by Mr Ides de Willebois, Director of West and Central Africa Division, IFAD

3 December 2015.

Mr chairman

Her Excellency the Vice President of the Republic of The Gambia and Minister of Women's Affairs

Hon Ministers

UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Country Representatives

Representatives of the Development Partners

Representative of Farmers Organizations and other CSOs

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am equally honoured to be part of this historic event for us to collectively and deeply reflect on the partnership between the Government of The Gambia and IFAD, which span over 33 years.

I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the government for lending all the necessary support to my colleagues from the Independent Office of Evaluation to conduct this first country Programme evaluation which started exactly a year ago. This would not have been possible without the great cooperation and collaboration from the government and I specially want to appreciate the excellent support from the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and his team for coordinating and facilitating this important initiative from the beginning. And I want to add that today's workshop is not the end of the process and I am convinced that the government will continue with its support until we have finally jointly signed the agreement at completion which will spell out all the key recommendations and actions needed to improve the country programme in The Gambia in the coming years.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, as mentioned by my colleague, evaluation is an important milestone in our development work. I always strongly encourage our frontline managers to see the values in the evaluation outcomes which also highlight areas requiring significant improvements and acknowledges areas that are working well. Therefore, this platform provides for us to collectively reflect, openly discuss and jointly agree on how we need to move forward with our renewed commitments to improving the performance of the country programme. I want to assure the government and all

participants here that IFAD conducts these evaluations in all our countries that we operate and the findings from The Gambia evaluation are not very different.

Mr chairman, ladies and gentlemen, What will make the great difference is our collective resolve to highly prioritize the imminent actions to take to systematically and comprehensively address all the highlighted key challenges with the aim to improve the pro-poor impact of all development interventions in the country. IFAD's sharpened mandate is to invest in rural people in a sustainable way by clearly demonstrating and providing evidence of how many of the over 700 000 rural people have been moved out of poverty through our interventions. This is our overarching priority. So it is for the government. We have the obligation to ensure that no poor person is left behind in the rural areas of The Gambia and for IFAD this specifically means that we want to see that our interventions in the country is moving poor farmers, women, youth and men out of poverty.

Yes, there are evidence that poverty (below the \$1.25/person/day) has reduced from 58% in 2004 to 48% in 2013 as reported in the latest integrated household survey and poverty assessment. Clearly, we still have almost half of the population trap in poverty which I am convinced are largely in the rural areas (74% of the rural population are below the \$1.25/day compared to 33% urban population). I want to stress that we should all embrace the principles of evaluation and from today, institute our self-evaluation initiatives in whatever we do so that we can continuously pause and reflect deeply on the question, " how well are my actions contributing to moving a smallholder farmer, woman, youth or man out of poverty from the resources I have?" Or "what more can I do to show clearly that I have contributed to moving a smallholder farmer out of poverty in this country?"

Mr chairman, Your Excellency the Vice President, ladies and gentlemen, In conclusion, IFAD will continue to remain committed to supporting Government's Agricultural and rural development priorities by ensuring that key conclusions and recommendations from this first ever CPE are fully taken into account to enhance sustainable smallholder agricultural value chain development while strengthening an inclusive and efficient partner approach to maximize investment impact for the rural poor people in the country.

Thank you