

Sierra Leone: IFAD Country Programme Evaluation Workshop, Freetown

Statement by Mr Lisandro Martin, Director of West and Central Africa Division,

IFAD (as delivered by John Hurley, Lead Regional Economist)

27 November, 2019

Your Excellencies

Honourable Ministers

Members of the Government

Representatives of UN Organizations

Representatives of Technical and Financial Partners

Representatives of Civil Society and Beneficiaries

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honoured to be part of this historic event for us to collectively and deeply reflect on the partnership between the Government of Sierra Leone and IFAD, which spans several decades.

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 Program evaluation. 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 Ministers of Finance, Agriculture and Forestry, and Planning and Economic Development, and their teams for coordinating and facilitating this important initiative. And I want to add that today's workshop is not the end of the process. We look forward to the signature of the agreement at completion, which will spell out all the key recommendations and actions needed to improve the country program in Sierra Leone in the coming years.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, IFAD fully recognizes and values the contribution of evaluation to our development work. Within the West and Central Africa Division, I always strongly encourage our frontline managers to utilize the evaluation outcomes, which highlight areas requiring improvement and acknowledge areas that are working well. Therefore, this platform provides for us to collectively reflect, openly discuss and jointly agree on how we can best move forward with our renewed commitments to improving the performance of the country program. These evaluations should not be looked upon as an opportunity to criticize what has happened in the past, but rather as a mechanism for learning from our work so we can be more effective in our assistance going forward, for the betterment of the good people of Sierra Leone.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I have no doubt that all of us, individually and collectively, are committed to improving the lives of those we serve, the poor, the

marginalized, the hungry. We can best help do this by prioritizing our interventions and actions in a systematic and coordinated manner with the aim of increasing the pro-poor impact of our projects and programs. IFAD has been charged by its members to invest in rural people in a sustainable way. They want us to clearly demonstrate, with quantitative and qualitative evidence, that our interventions move rural people out of poverty. This is our overarching priority. They want to see evidence that we are reducing gender inequality, they want to see proof that we are improving nutrition, they want to know that we are providing new economic opportunities for the young and marginalized, including the disabled, and they want to be assured that we are doing all we can to address the impacts of climate change.

Nowhere is this more important than here in Sierra Leone. I do not want to provide a lot of numbers that you will soon forget – rather I ask that you remember just these that are from the report:

- Sierra Leone ranked 150 out of 160 countries in terms of gender equality, according to the 2017 Gender Inequality Index;
- Somewhere between 60 and 70 percent of young people are unemployed or underemployed; and

- Chronic malnutrition of children under five is around 31 percent, according to the country's National Nutrition Strategy.

But for me, the most important number is the following:

According to the Global Peace Index, Sierra Leone is the 52nd most peaceful country in the world. This number, to me, shows the enormous potential of the country; racked by civil war just twenty years ago, it has become the sixth most peaceful country on the continent of Africa. It gives me great hope that working together and applying ourselves productively, we can accomplish goals that are now thought of as just wishful dreams.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, IFAD will continue to remain committed to supporting Sierra Leone'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 to maximize our impact for the benefit of the rural poor people in the country.

Thank you