



Enabling poor rural people
to overcome poverty

Fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Statement on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), delivered by
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Mr. Chairperson,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address the Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) as the Commission looks back at what has been achieved over the past 15 years and where we need to focus greater attention, going forward.

The Secretary-General's comprehensive review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action shows clearly that women and girls living in rural and remote areas are more vulnerable and experience greater discrimination— in education and training, in health, in employment and business. They are often not aware of their rights and lack access to land and property. In public and political life, their voices are often not heard. When they are victims of violence they often have nowhere to go for support.

The report also highlights many of the inroads that have been made since 1995. Rural women were not identified as a specific critical area of concern in the Platform for Action, but over the years, they have gained recognition and gathered support to improve their situation. The Secretary-General's report notes that, in particular, rural women's needs and priorities have been better addressed in agricultural policies. Many countries have adopted gender equality policies for the agricultural sector and have established specialized units within Ministries of Agriculture as measures to reduce gender inequalities in rural areas. This mirrors the actions that IFAD undertakes, in collaboration with borrowing governments. In El Salvador, for instance, the IFAD-financed Reconstruction and Rural Modernization Programme (PREMODER) supported the establishment of a Unit for the Strengthening of and Support to Gender Policies (UFAG) within the Ministry for Agriculture and Livestock.

Mr. Chairperson,

Over the past 15 years, IFAD has increased efforts to address gender equality and women's empowerment in a comprehensive way. Internally, we have changed business processes to improve the design of projects -- screening them to ensure that they involve women in the design process and that they effectively target poor women and men. To monitor implementation, we have introduced measures to capture gender-specific impact in monitoring and evaluation. The

Fund also carried out a number of grant financed programmes that enhanced the economic empowerment of rural women and promoted gender equality.

IFAD also provides space for women and men in farmers' organizations to voice their concerns. The third biennial Farmers' Forum took place last month in Rome. IFAD has come to realize that our partnerships with farmers' organizations have improved our understanding of rural poverty. They have enabled us to focus more on the smaller and poorer farmers in the programmes we support, while benefiting from local and indigenous knowledge and experience. This has improved country strategies and project design and brought more sustainable benefits to smallholders.

Women farmers are organized either in separate women's organizations or in mixed organizations, where they are often underrepresented. This year, a special meeting was organized for women in farmers organizations to address their concerns. In their final statement, the Farmers' Forum urged IFAD and other donors to support the economic empowerment of women farmers with new and significant resources and to set quotas for their participation. More resources are also needed to strengthen knowledge, skills and leadership in order to produce and process food more effectively and in a sustainable manner. The women farmers, fishers and pastoralists also recommended that the NEPAD Secretariat establish a CAADP focal point to accelerate the partnership with farmers' organizations.

Mr. Chairperson,

2010 is an important year for advancing gender equality. For IFAD, it brings opportunities to raise attention to rural women and women farmers and to mobilize support by partners for this cause. Substantial progress toward achieving MDG 1 and other international development goals depends heavily on improving agricultural development and enhancing food society. It also requires an understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of men and women in family agriculture, along with priority investments in women farmers and rural producers. Sustained efforts are needed to ensure that benefits generated by the heightened attention paid to food security and agriculture benefit rural women who play a key role in producing, marketing and processing food.

Mr. Chairperson,

We call on Member States and the UN system to use of the various intergovernmental events in 2010 to direct attention to gender equality and to women in agriculture, in particular the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review and the MDG Review Summit.

We look forward to working with others toward this end.

Thank you.