

Address of the Nordic Countries

At the 41st session of the Governing Council of IFAD
in Rome,
13-14 February 2018.

Jon Erlingur Jonasson
Minister Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative
of Iceland to FAO, WFP and IFAD,

Chair, Distinguished Governors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic Countries: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Iceland.

Allow me first to welcome president Hounbou to his first Governing Council as President of the organization. His strong presence, strategic vision and relentless efforts to secure funding for IFAD 11, as well as his commitment to take youth better into account in IFAD's work, are all appreciated.

The topic of this Governing Council emphasizes the move from fragility to long term resilience. The topic's relevance is highlighted in view of 2017 being the first year since 2003 where the number of food-insecure and chronically undernourished increased.

Chair, allow me at this point to mention some of the views of the Nordic countries in relation to the work of IFAD.

IFAD is well placed in supporting partner countries in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in terms of eradicating poverty and hunger. IFAD has a good focus, in helping poorest of the poor in rural areas, affecting positively the situation of young people to find sustainable and meaningful livelihoods. We welcome the agreement that was reached on increasing the support to the poorest countries to 90 percent. This will strengthen IFAD's engagement where it is most needed, while recognizing the will to also engage with countries with stronger economies.

The Nordic countries support on-going decentralization effort, aiming at increasing both the efficiency and the effectiveness of the organization. However, in view of IFAD's limited resources, we have cautioned against spreading the resources too thinly and favored consolidating and strengthening the capacity of existing country offices. Decentralization will also have to be implemented hand in hand with the UN Development Sector reform. Recognizing that reorganization and decentralization always comes at a cost, including for a staff, which needs to be highly motivated and well-performing. We look forward to be better informed about all sides of the ongoing reform processes.

In our address one year ago, we applauded the progress IFAD had made in mainstreaming gender in its programs. We encourage IFAD to become even more gender transformative in all of its activities in aiming at empowering rural women and girls. More financial resources should be allocated to the gender work. The principles of equality should be as recognizable in IFAD's engagement in countries as well as within the organization.

The SDG agenda reaffirms the responsibilities of all States to respect, protect and promote human rights. We would like IFAD to keep its strong focus in improving situation of women and girls and take concrete steps towards applying a human rights-based approach in all its operations, centered around the objective of turning the right to food a reality. Equality, non-discrimination, participation, inclusivity, accountability and transparency should systematically be integrated as crosscutting

principles in all stages of project cycle. We also encourage IFAD to continue its work in improving the situation of vulnerable groups like indigenous people.

The Nordic countries welcome the leading role that IFAD has taken in integrating climate change and its impacts on food security in its programming. The strengthened ambitions enshrined in the framework for the IFAD11-period are all important steps in this direction and they are warmly welcomed. We now look forward to seeing these ambitions transformed into forceful action, and further strengthened as we move ahead. Next steps should include deeper climate mainstreaming and higher levels of finance dedicated to climate issues, as well as strengthened methodologies for measuring and reporting results and impact, that can inform and inspire partners on all levels.

Finally, a comment related to the United Nations Development System, being under reform, we would welcome information about how IFAD sees its own challenges in light of the UN Secretary-General's reforms, and how to handle them.

I thank you.