

**Statement by Sri Lanka at the 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the Governing Council of IFAD,  
13-14 February 2018, Rome, Italy**

Mr.Chairman,  
Distinguished Governors,  
Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a honour and great pleasure to participate at IFAD's 41<sup>st</sup> Session of the Governing Council. On behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka, let me first take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to IFAD and commend Mr. Gilbert F. Houngbo President of IFAD for his excellent leadership in shepherding the IFAD as an effective vehicle to achieve its goal in collaboration with member countries.

Mr.Chairman, allow me, to express my appreciation to IFAD for selecting the theme of this year's interactive session "From fragility to long-term resilience: investing in sustainable rural economies" which is a most appropriate theme in relation to the present international scenario, including that of Sri Lanka as all countries are experiencing a certain level of fragility. It is also a crucial factor for the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). I hope that this interactive session would pave the way to all participants of member countries of IFAD to contribute to achieve SDGs.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to all the officials of IFAD who have made tremendous efforts to design and implement the projects in Sri Lanka in line with the national development agenda of Sri Lanka.

As you are aware, IFAD has been a long standing development partner of Sri Lanka and its first development assistance was provided for the "Krindi Oya Irrigation and Settlement Project" in 1978. Since then, IFAD and the Government of Sri Lanka have been working together to achieve food security, ensuring higher and more sustainable income for farmers, improving production and productivity, and sustainably managing the environment.

As in other regional countries, the agriculture sector plays a crucial role in the economy of Sri Lanka. About eighty percent of the country's population resides in the rural areas. Agriculture is the backbone of the

economy and provides significant opportunities for employment as almost one third of the total labour force is engaged in agriculture , traditionally dominated by rice and plantation crop production. The poverty rate in Sri Lanka which is dominated by the agriculture based economy is comparatively high. Therefore, the current government has emphasized the importance of the development of this sector and has placed high priority for the development of the agriculture sector with special emphasis on economic empowerment of women for the aim of alleviating rural poverty. The Government has already taken a number of initiatives to improve the productivity in the agriculture sector while transferring the subsistence farming into commercial agriculture.

Up to now, more than USD 400 million in development assistance to finance 19 projects have been received from the IFAD by way of loans to reduce rural poverty. Nearly 2.2 million poor people in Sri Lanka in various sectors like fisheries, agriculture, and irrigation have been benefitted as a result of this development partnership. I also believe that the Sustainable Development Goals which have been set to eliminate these impacts will have an important place in IFAD's agenda.

It is apparent that IFAD has stepped up its engagement in implementing the 2030 agenda in collaboration with all relevant agencies and member countries while fulfilling the financial requirements of the member countries. As an active member country, it is our responsibility to provide our fullest support to IFAD to achieve its targets while utilizing its funds in an effective and efficient manner.

In this light, while expressing my sincere gratitude once again for the continued development assistance of IFAD, I would like to reassure Sri Lanka's fullest commitment to collaborate with IFAD in its own capacity and potentials. We look forward to stronger and more intensive engagement with IFAD in future.

