

IFAD's President, Gilbert F Houngbo and your staff,  
Distinguished Head of States and Governors,  
IFAD's partners,  
Delegates and Observers,  
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the President of Kiribati, His Excellency Mr. Taneti Mamau and the people of Kiribati whom had benefitted abundantly from the innovative programs of IFAD, it is indeed my honour to relay our sincere gratitude and appreciation to IFAD and all her partners.

With due respect, Kiribati is much delighted and grateful to His Holiness Pope Francis that he shares his busy schedule and grace to this auspicious gathering. As we ponder of our deliberations in these two days on how to achieve the fundamental human right to ensure food security for all, it is indeed a heartfelt gratitude that He is with us in this endeavour.

Kiribati's overall agriculture potential is practically classified as limited due to its poor soil profile, being shallow, alkaline and low in organic matter to support good and adequate plant's growth. Compounded with climate change impacts, and the migration of abled bodies (especially youths) out of the rural areas in search of paid jobs in urban areas leaving a high population of mostly women and old people to farm the challenging lands, agriculture does not pose good image for development. However, the Government of Kiribati together with its partners like IFAD, FAO to name a few do see the potential in growing just enough to sustain the population. The traditional skills of which had been the fundamental of cultivating the unfertile soil together with using resilient food crop varieties and the strong commitment and will of all key players will sustain farming and revitalize food production on these atolls with their harsh climate conditions.

The Kiribati Outer Island Food and Water Project (KOIFAWP) funded by IFAD has touched the lives of our 12,000 rural people on four outer islands of Kiribati namely Abemama, Nonouti, Tabiteuea North and Beru. The project has helped to provide and install water tanks among the beneficiary communities of whom had now enjoy drinking clean and safe rainwater. In addition, the project has also successfully undertaken intense agricultural innovative research work in close collaboration between the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), the Secretariat Pacific Community (SPC) and the Government of Kiribati through its Agriculture and Livestock Division (ALD). The findings that the project has achieved especially in the irrigation system designed, addressed both the shortage of freshwater and high maintenance labour work for watering crops. With this new simple technology, the labour intense watering of food crops is no longer carried out twice on a daily basis but is only carried out when the water level in the system is low which takes 2-3 days. The government of Kiribati through its Country Strategy Note (CSN) has highlighted the need to scale up this innovative system to other outer islands earmarked as project sites for the second phase of the project.

The theme "Rural Innovation and Entrepreneurship" is very timing to Kiribati. The Kiribati Development Plan (2016-2019) streamlined the four pillars of the Kiribati Vision for the next 20 years (KV20) namely (i) Wealth, (ii) Peace and Security, (iii) Infrastructure, and, (iv) Governance . These four pillars and all efforts are consorted to rural innovation and entrepreneurship to enhance the livelihoods of both the rural people as well as urban dwellers who are heavily depended on less nutritive and cheap imported food stuff.

Nonetheless, trading locally produced foods among the 23 inhabited islands is another huge challenge to the government to overcome. The islands are scattered over a large area of ocean let

alone the perishable nature of these agricultural produces. Tracking the perishable problem, the government's focus is on longer shelf life produces and had made commitment to assist the marketing of these produces from rural areas to urban areas where the demand is high. As for shorter shelf life produces, post-harvest and value add are packaged into training kits as to upskill farmers to be able to market also these short shelf life produces.

Much work and effort are needed to overcome the many challenges of agriculture in Kiribati that are further enhanced by the impacts of climate change. In our efforts to implement set targets to achieve Agenda 2030 which correspond and aligned well to the national goals, I am sure opportunities will emerge to enable our consolidated efforts to enhance our actions to reduce risks from climate change impacts. Our call to our partners to lend us a hand as we come in need of it. Our government stay committed to play its role in getting the needed enabling services and environment to our farmers as well as fisherfolks to secure food production that is enough to sustain our growing population.

At this juncture, I wish to thank all partners who had contributed to reinvigorate food production worldwide of which we less developing countries have benefitted much from your hard work. I also wish to take this opportunity to commend IFAD's President for his great leadership that had steered this organization and took us all this far. Please, allow me to also extend our appreciation to our host of the meeting, FAO, who had graciously avail its premise for this gathering. I would fail in my duty should I forget to thank my fellow governors colleagues for the fruitful meeting that we had had. And Last but not least, it is Kiribati's sincere gratitude to the government of Italy for its warm host and welcome despite its cold weather. May the grace of the Almighty be upon you all. Te Mauri (Health ), Te Raoi (Peace) and Te Tabomoa (and Prosperity) iaomi (upon you all).