Statement by the representative of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

In taking the floor in this forty-second session of the IFAD Governing Council, in the name of the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, I would first like to thank His Holiness Pope Francis for honouring us with his presence in this Council, which is testimony to the high importance the Universal Catholic Church accords to matters associated with food and nutrition security, as well as the eradication of poverty, especially in rural areas, to achieve a world without hunger, where all human beings can live together in harmony.

Our thanks and congratulations as well to his Excellency, Mr. Gilbert Houngbo, President of IFAD, for the excellent organizing of this Council and his hard work at the helm of IFAD since his election.

We would also like to congratulate FAO's Administration for agreeing to hold the Council in this pleasant Plenary Chamber.

This forty-second session of the IFAD Governing Council is convening at a time when the global food security situation has become critical due to the growing number of people experiencing hunger around the world.

The Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea greatly appreciates IFAD's efforts in its ongoing search for mechanisms to support smallholder farmers in rural areas, empower women and promote youth employment. I am therefore certain that, given its specialized mandate, it will promote rural transformation by playing a key role in creating the conditions necessary to ensure that innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit will prosper in rural areas.

In the specific case of our country, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, agriculture continues to consist largely of family farming, with a high proportion of female labour in areas ranging from production and harvesting to marketing.

Capitalising on the benefits derived from oil and gas, as well as the opportunities provided by nature itself (I am referring here to soil fertility and climate), my government is introducing rural policies aimed at mobilizing human resources, without gender distinctions, for more profitable agriculture that will boost the country's productive capacity, thereby reducing the high volume of food imports that Equatorial Guinea has required up to now.

The Government's rural development and food security strategies are based on the creation of cooperatives and rural associations to foster rural transformation, which plays a key role in creating the conditions necessary for innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit to grow in rural areas, with technical assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry and the Environment, which I have the honour to lead.

Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the problems and challenges that we face, such as the lack of technology for processing our agricultural products, for example.

To find solutions to our problems, we have prepared a Plan of Action with the object of achieving sustainable agriculture, supported by the national zoning of agricultural production and the promotion of cooperatives, industrialization, and exports of our national products.

At the end of April and beginning of May, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea will hold the III National Economic Conference. Here, the achievements of the National Economic and Social Development Plan, Horizon 2020, which we are currently implementing, will be analysed to establish a new horizon that will lead us to economic diversification through the modernization of sustainable growing techniques and the organization of domestic and foreign trade together with industrialization. To this end, we are requesting support from experienced partners, such as IFAD, to meet these goals, implement the African Union's Malabo Declaration, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

We recognize that we have a long road ahead and face numerous problems and obstacles. Thus, everyone must work to tackle the enormous challenge of achieving food and nutrition security for all.