

Statement by the representative for Gabon

It is a genuine pleasure for me to participate in this forty-third session of the Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development. On behalf of the Government of Gabon, which I have the great honour of representing here today, I would like to extend my very best wishes for this new year. May 2020 be a highly successful one for the attainment of our shared objectives.

Under the leadership of His Excellency Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic and Head of State, the Government of the Gabonese Republic intends to make greater use of agriculture than in the past to leverage strong increases in our nation's economic growth, job creation and value added.

The theme of this forty-third session of the Governing Council of IFAD – Investing in sustainable food systems to end hunger by 2030 – seems highly appropriate to us for a number of reasons.

In my country, the need to promote smallholder agriculture and to develop partnerships with the private sector to ensure food and nutrition security for the rural population are part of the overall effort required to end hunger by 2030.

By joining forces around the shared goal of food and nutrition sovereignty, we can fulfil FAO's number one mission of leading the drive to attain zero hunger, a mission that our Government embraces.

In Gabon, the percentage of the population that is undernourished, that is to say, that does not have enough food in quantitative terms, fell from 9.7 per cent in 2004 to 7 per cent in 2017, which is equivalent to a reduction of 48,600 persons in that population group. To build on this trend, the Prime Minister of Gabon, Mr Julien Nkoghe Bekale, has launched a major reform effort within the framework of the Government's economic reactivation plan. The objectives of that reform are the following:

- To facilitate access to land by setting up high-productivity farming zones. These zones are agricultural development poles that include agribusinesses, agricultural entrepreneurs and smallholders that are all part of the same value chain. Within this framework, the National Commission for Land Allocation has recently granted 45,200 hectares of arable land to the Ministry of Agriculture.
- To support family farming and rural agriculture through the Gabonese Agricultural Achievements and Initiatives of Committed Nationals programme, which is supported by the African Development Bank, phase II of the Agricultural Development and Investment Project, with the support of the French Development Agency, and phase II of the Agricultural and Rural Development Project (PDAR-II), which is being cofinanced by IFAD in Gabon.
- To reinforce the agricultural training system by, among other lines of action, introducing a work/study certificate programme to provide training to a large number of young people interested in farming and to award them a diploma that attests to the expertise they have gained. The long-term objective is to professionalize the farm sector.
- To launch a high-yield seed supply system. To that end, on 31 January 2020 the Council of Ministers adopted the draft of a seeds policy document that seeks to achieve alignment with the seeds policy of the Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa by providing for the establishment of a national seed council as a consultative body, a support fund for the seed sector and a national seed catalogue.

With regard to PDAR-II, I would like to once again express our gratitude to IFAD, which has spared no effort to help to combat hunger and improve the living conditions of the rural population in our country.

This second phase of the project will allow us to consolidate the ground gained and the positive impact achieved under PDAR-I.

PDAR-II is designed to improve the agricultural policy environment as a means of promoting increased public and private investment thanks to an effective and sustainable system for policy formulation, implementation and monitoring. Promoting economic activities and entrepreneurship among the young population in agropastoral value chains is another objective of this second phase.

Gabon's economic reactivation plan places priority on the farm sector with a view to developing the country's agricultural potential and attaining food and nutrition security.

That is why we look forward to IFAD's assistance in facilitating the start-up of PDAR-II, which is intended to reach more than 16,000 beneficiaries and 7,300 households, to help to create 2,700 jobs and to promote 250 youth-run formal-sector enterprises in segments of value chains both upstream and downstream of production activities, including services.

By reinforcing the participation of all categories of stakeholders in the governance of these sectors, the project will be able to reach the most fragile groups in the rural population.

This forum is an appropriate one in which to reaffirm Gabon's commitment to working alongside IFAD and FAO to achieve the second Sustainable Development Goal of ending hunger, ensuring food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture. Our country also stands ready to support IFAD's various efforts around the world in its quest to reduce rural poverty.

In the context of the intensified pace of reforms in the farm sector, Gabon's contribution to the Twelfth Replenishment of IFAD's Resources will be transmitted starting in 2021.

I do not doubt for a single instant that our pursuit of our shared objectives will improve the living conditions of our rural populations on a sustainable basis.

Thank you for your attention.