

Statement by the representative of the Republic of Tunisia

I am honoured to extend my warmest regards and express my pleasure at participating in the proceedings of the 43rd session of the Governing Council of IFAD.

Since Tunisian independence, the agriculture and fisheries sector in Tunisia has been a main pillar of the national economy that has contributed to the achievement of a number of our development goals. In recent years, the sector has helped boost economic growth, achieve food security, develop exports, reduce migration, add value to available natural resources and protect the environment.

Tunisia has so far succeeded in its democratic transition but still faces economic and social challenges. We thus rely on our partners to support the development process, especially IFAD, which has partnered with us in the development process since the early years of our independence and remains one of our main partners in supporting the agricultural sector. Tunisia has to date benefited from IFAD loans and grants totalling US\$465 million, which have helped finance 15 projects in the agricultural sector, including three projects in progress.

IFAD-financed projects:

- Are oriented towards problematic rural areas, especially fragile and low-income areas;
- Help break the isolation of the rural population and improve their living conditions by providing infrastructure and production means and reducing the effects of drought;
- Use the participatory approach to identify and implement projects; this approach has entrenched entrepreneurship and initiative among beneficiaries by involving them in playing key roles that contribute effectively to the success of their enterprises; and
- Give special attention to rural women and young people and engage them in improving their living conditions.

Despite the efforts and achievements of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries, the agricultural sector still faces difficulties and obstacles associated with natural resource scarcity and fragility, climate change and production inputs. These difficulties pose challenges for production units - especially small and family units - in their efforts to increase productivity, diversify and stabilize output, control production costs to enhance value, conserve and optimally exploit natural resources and create additional income sources to ensure sustainability.

Thus, the country's agricultural development policy for 2016-2020 aims primarily to develop and ensure natural resource sustainability, limit climate-change effects, address the land situation, counter the dispersion of ownership, tighten the exploitation of international farmland, enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of production systems, promote investment in and financing of agricultural activity, nurture small and family farming, strengthen the role of agriculture in rural development, and rationalize the governance of the agriculture and fisheries sector.

In this context, during 2018, the Fund completed two studies. One evaluates the portfolio of projects completed during the previous period. The other concerns preparation of a future programme for the follow-on period (2019-2024). The future programme further targets active vulnerable groups of beneficiaries, especially rural women and youth, by providing them with financing and with opportunities to invest in economic activities that create jobs and improve income based on partnerships with all parties involved.

In the first phase of the programme (2019-2021), the Fund will provide US\$23 million to finance the Economic, Social and Solidarity Project in the governorate of Kairouan under a financing agreement signed on 10 February 2020.

In the second phase of the programme (2022-2024), a new project, to be determined later, will be funded.

To conclude, I must mention the important role played by IFAD as a strategic partner of Tunisia in promoting the agriculture and fisheries sector, which is a vital sector in our country. We hope that the Fund will continue in the coming years to support our country's development and help us address our economic and social challenges. I renew my thanks and gratitude to the Fund.