

Mr. President, Distinguished Governors, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The overarching theme of the 44<sup>th</sup> Governing Council *Rural development: a prerequisite for global resilience* could not be timelier.

Hunger has been on the rise for several years now. In addition to this alarming trend, the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 are yet to fully unfold, threatening to push millions more into hunger and poverty. With supply chains being interrupted, income losses and other shocks occurring, food security has considerably declined, hitting in particular the already poor and vulnerable. Clearly, considering these factors, efforts to reach the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 need to be strengthened.

In light of this, the importance of IFAD's work cannot be underlined enough and has been demonstrated by the successful 12<sup>th</sup> replenishment of its resources amid the current fiscally challenging situation in so many countries. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate IFAD on this success. It is also a clear statement of the relevance of IFAD's mission to focus on the poorest groups in the poorest countries including women, youth, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities.

Most of the world's poorest and undernourished live in rural areas in developing countries. With sustainable food systems being at the heart of the 2030 Agenda and playing a crucial role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, we welcome the role of IFAD in working with small-scale farmers, who often provide the back bone of food systems in rural areas. With small-scale farmers and rural people being often more vulnerable to climate change and other related shocks, we commend IFAD in particular for its increased focus on building resilience through measures that increase food security and climate resilience at the same time, such as the ASAP+ programme. We are convinced that investments in climate resilience are investments in global resilience.

Austria also commends IFAD for its work on gender equality to reduce rural poverty and food insecurity. Rural women often bear a disproportional burden when it comes to providing for their families and communities while being limited in their access to finance, land and other resources. Empowering rural women is therefore a detrimental component of resilience and we encourage IFAD to continue and strengthen its transformative work in this area.

In line with this Austria would like to applaud IFAD for stepping up its targets and engagement on climate finance, biodiversity and gender equality in IFAD-12. Austria has continuously been lobbying for an increase in climate finance in the portfolio of all International Financial Institutions it works with. In addition, we commend IFAD on its increased focus on Africa in particular Sub-Saharan Africa and we welcome the focus on conflict affected situations as conflict exacerbates food insecurity.

Moreover, we welcome the reforms of IFAD's financial architecture undertaken over the last years that help IFAD to broaden and deepen its development impact. It is in this context that we also congratulate IFAD on becoming the first fund in the United Nations System to receive a public credit rating, even from two credit agencies. Austria remains open to discuss any possible further steps in strengthening IFAD's financial capacity, as long as IFAD remains in line with its mission to focus on the poorest population.

Before concluding, let me take the opportunity to thank President Hougbo, as well as IFAD Management and staff for the excellent work they have been doing. Thank you.