

Excellencies,  
Mr. President,  
Distinguished Governors,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

With only seven years left to 2030, the world is facing an uphill battle in meeting the ambitious targets we have set for ourselves of ending hunger, food insecurity and all forms of malnutrition for everyone on planet earth. Compounding crises, including the lingering and unequal effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and the war of aggression in Ukraine, involving two of the biggest producers in agriculture and staple cereals globally, have exacerbated persisting inequalities and worsened the food security situation for those populations already struggling the most to feed their families.

The numbers paint a dire picture - after remaining relatively unchanged since 2015, the proportion of people affected by hunger jumped in 2020 and continued to rise in 2021, to 9.8% of the world population, meaning around 828 million people go hungry every day. Rural populations are hit particularly hard - while they account for the production of about half the world's food calories, they are often the first to go hungry when a crisis arrives.

While humanitarian relief needs have steadily increased in the face of ongoing crises, donor support for agriculture has remained stagnant at just 4% of total ODA for at least two decades. The theme of this year's Governing Council of IFAD – 'Accelerating action for food security' - could thus not be timelier.

Food security lies firmly at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. As the global population continues to grow, and the effects of climate change increasingly threaten our food systems, it is more important than ever that we take action to ensure that everyone has access to the nutritious food they need to thrive. Through sequestering carbon in soil and plants and promoting adaptation and resilience, agriculture plays a crucial part in effective climate action. Yet, small-scale farmers from developing countries, who produce one-third of the world's food, only receive 1.7% of climate finance, even as they are forced to cope with droughts, floods, cyclones and other disasters.

There are few institutions better placed than IFAD to catalyze action at the nexus of the fight against climate change and ensuring food security for all. Through the Enhanced Adaptation for Smallholder Agriculture Programme (ASAP+), which Austria proudly supports, IFAD plays an important role in channeling much needed climate finance to smallholder farmers at the front lines of climate change. Moreover, IFAD is doing well in mainstreaming climate considerations into its core mandate. Going forward, Austria strongly encourages IFAD to further increase its climate ambition by increasing the share of climate finance under IFAD 13 and by mobilizing additional climate finance for small-scale agriculture through its program of loans and grants.

Accelerating effective action for food security in the face of the climate crisis requires us to be inclusive in our efforts, working eye-to-eye with those populations we aim to support. Austria strongly welcomes the prominence that is given to the pivotal role that indigenous populations, as well as youth, play in creating and innovating on sustainable food systems within IFAD's work in general and at this year's Governing Council in particular, and lauds IFAD on its recently updated Policy on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples and its exemplary Disability Inclusion Strategy.

Finally, in a time where crowding in additional sources of financing for small-scale agriculture is increasingly indispensable if we want to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Austria warmly applauds IFAD for securing a high share of co-financing for its work, as evidenced under IFAD 11.

Allow me to end my remarks by congratulating President Lario on his recent election as IFAD President and by expressing Austria's sincere gratitude for the important work done by IFAD staff and management over the past year.

Thank you.

[END]