

Opening Remarks
By
**H.E. Pen Thirong, Director General, General Department of International
Cooperation and Debt Management**

**National Workshop on Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation
(CSPE)**

24 January 2018

- *Ms. Khalida Bouzar, IFAD Director of Near East, North Africa and Europe Division*
- *IFAD Officers of the Independent Office of Evaluation, IFAD*
- *Representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries*
- *Representatives of the Development Partners*
- *Representatives of Farmer Organizations, NGOs and the Private Sector*
- *Colleagues from the Line Ministries as the Implementing Agencies Ladies and Gentlemen*

I am very pleased to provide the opening remarks on behalf of the Ministry of Economy and Finance to this national workshop to discuss the Country Strategy and Programme Evaluation (CSPE)

I am very impressed to see such a wide participation in this very important workshop with representatives of the complete range of stakeholders in attendance. This is truly a demonstration of the comprehensive, inclusive and participatory approach that IFAD pursues in developing its strategic assistance program for its borrowers. Let me congratulate IFAD, in particular the Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE), the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Economy and Finance for the impressive arrangements that enabled the participation of such a large number of stakeholders.

Agricultural sector plays an important role in supporting economic growth, ensuring equity, supporting food security and promoting the rural economy in Cambodia and above all, reducing poverty. As you all know, the largest concentration of the most vulnerable poor resides in the rural areas and are engaged in small holder farming. IFAD has and continues to remain a very valued partner of Cambodia as the focus of its support and assistance has been on smallholders which is critical for poverty reduction. The importance of today's workshop should therefore be looked at in this context.

The purpose of this national workshop is to discuss the recommendations of the first CSPE which was carried out by IFAD's IOE and agree on the necessary follow up actions which will be spelled out in the Agreement at Completion Point (ACP). I understand that the draft CSPE, based on the evaluation of the performance and results of the IFAD funded portfolio of 7 projects between 2000 and 2016 as well as other non-lending activities, was circulated to all stakeholders for their review and comments on 30 October 2017 and has now been finalised. The CSPE has generated a number of findings and 5 recommendations which will be discussed in this workshop which are of utmost importance as these will provide the inputs for future partnership between IFAD and RGC for enhancement of development effectiveness and rural poverty eradication.

The 5 recommendations and the **proposed follow up actions** are contained in the draft Agreement at Completion Point (ACP) which has been circulated in advance of the workshop are:

- 1) Develop and operationalize a two-pronged strategy for the portfolio,
- 2) Balance investment in human capital and rural organizations supported by strategic partners, with tangible items,
- 3) Pursue more strategic planning and use of grants and investment financing to deepen partnerships with farmer organizations/associations,
- 4) Explore options for supporting regulatory services in agriculture in future pipeline development,
- 5) IFAD to work with the Government to strategize and facilitate mobilization of other partners to invest in smallholder agriculture.

The workshop will discuss the proposed follow up actions to seek your inputs for their **validation or refinement**. At the end of the workshop, the draft ACP will be refined based on the results of the workshop and officially signed by the Ministry of Economy and Finance as the representative of the RGC and the IFAD represented by the Associate Vice President, Programme Management Department. Please note that the ACP will be submitted to the IFAD Executive Board at the end of February or early March 2018 as an annex to **the new country strategic opportunities programme for Cambodia**.

Given the immense importance of ACP in determining the next country strategic opportunities programme, I urge all of the participants, particularly the line ministries, the farmer organizations, the NGOs and the private sector, to engage fully in the discussions, provide your suggestions that can best address your and Cambodia's needs, and give your inputs for the follow up actions. Please do not hesitate to offer your candid comments in a meaningful way.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the IFAD, MAFF and the MEF colleagues for organising this national workshop. A very special thanks to all the participants for taking their valuable time to participate in today's workshop. I wish you all success and fruitful results.

Thank you.