

**Uzbekistan Country Strategy and Programme
Evaluation Virtual National Workshop, 24 February
2022**

**Introductory Statement by Mr Indran Naidoo, Director of the
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD**

Distinguished representatives of the Government of Uzbekistan,
Representatives of IFAD, partner institutions and international
organizations,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be part of this virtual national workshop, organized by the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD in collaboration with the Government of Uzbekistan and the Near East, North Africa, Europe and Central Asia Division of IFAD. This workshop follows the finalization of the independent country strategy and programme evaluation in Uzbekistan and provides an opportunity to share and discuss the main findings and recommendations with the Government, IFAD and other stakeholders and partners.

I would like to start by expressing my appreciation to the Government of Uzbekistan and to the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade, Ministry of Agriculture, and executing agencies for their collaboration on this evaluation. Our appreciation goes to the project teams and partner organizations for sharing insights, supporting field visits, and patience in responding to numerous requests for data and information from the evaluation team.

I would also like to recognize the support of the IFAD Programme Management Department, in particular: Mr Donal Brown, Associate Vice-President who cannot be with us today; Ms Dina Saleh, Regional Director of IFAD's Near East, North Africa, and Europe Division; Mr Fidy Rajaonson, IFAD country director for Uzbekistan.

Finally, I would like to thank the evaluation team, led by Ms Simona Somma, Lead Evaluation Officer, who was ably supported by a team of national and international consultants. Ms Daniela Asprella, Evaluation Assistant, provided efficient administrative support to the team and to the organization of today's event.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This was the first independent country strategy and programme evaluation in Uzbekistan. The objectives of this evaluation were to: assess the results and performance of the IFAD-financed strategy and programme since 2011; and provide findings, lessons and recommendations to inform the next IFAD country strategy and the future partnership between IFAD and Government.

Let me now highlight a few key findings from the evaluation, while Ms Simona Somma will deliver a more comprehensive presentation later.

Agriculture has been, and continues to be, an engine of economic growth in Uzbekistan. Yet, access to finance, production infrastructure, extension services and value chains remain limited, particularly for the poorest smallholders - the dehkan farmers. Social development is strengthening, yet there is gender inequality and growing rural unemployment, as well as increasing environmental threats from climate change.

Against this background, the partnership between IFAD and the Government is more pertinent than ever, to make rural economy more inclusive and sustainable and support the country in achieving rural transformation.

In this respect, the evaluation found that IFAD's support in promoting rural development was aligned with the country needs and priorities and will continue to be relevant for Uzbekistan given the persistent disparities in living standards between urban and rural areas and the effects of the global pandemic, which is creating additional financing needs.

On the other hand, the evaluation pointed to some areas that deserve attention.

Firstly, the CSPE found that IFAD's targeting strategy was not sufficiently tailored to the needs of the different beneficiary groups, including of the poorest smallholders - the dehkan farmers.

Secondly, IFAD's weak programme support and limited interactions with in-country partners, during the review period, affected results and the potential of policy dialogue.

Lastly, I would like to focus on the importance of monitoring, measuring and evaluating the results of agriculture activities in Uzbekistan. A robust monitoring and evaluation system is essential to gather evidence of what works, what does not work and how to course correct and improve projects and programmes moving forward. The evaluation found that the M&E system is weak, and this affected the

availability of evidence of results, knowledge generation and the capacity of IFAD to unlock the potential for learning to promote innovation and scaling-up and influence policy dialogue.

In this regard, it is my sincere hope that this evaluation will offer the ground to enhance the capacity at the country level to monitor, collect, analyse and transform data into knowledge that can inform policy making. We look forward to support the Government of Uzbekistan in this endeavour through the Global Evaluation Initiative, the new compact network which brings in major international and regional capacity. I will be happy to bring this conversation forward with IFAD and the government of Uzbekistan in the coming weeks.

I thank you for your attention.