

# World leaders and celebrities call for greater investment to end hunger and poverty

ROME, ITALY, February 12, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Heads of state, ministers, development leaders, and celebrities today called for greater investment in rural areas to accelerate progress to achieve a world free from poverty and hunger in the next 10 years.



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*IFAD President Gilbert F. Hounbo*

The call was made at the 43rd Session of the Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) attended by its 177 Member States. This comes at a time when hunger is rising. More than 820 million people go hungry every day, 736 million people still live in extreme poverty, and the wealth gap continues to widen.

IFAD President Gilbert F. Hounbo called reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger in 10 years “an abstract vision, a distant mirage” unless serious commitments are made to invest more in rural areas where 79 per cent of the world’s poorest people and the vast majority of the

hungry live.

“The road ahead is clear: the road to achieving the SDGs must run through rural areas,” Hounbo said. “We must travel to the end of that road and invest in the most marginalized people – small-scale producers, women, youth and indigenous peoples – to deliver on our SDG commitments.”

The President of the Republic of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, opened the two-day event. Like other countries in the Sahel region, Mali is struggling under the dual scourge of conflict and climate change, which is making bumper harvests practically insignificant against the food shortages the country faces, as farmers abandon their fields to escape the crisis.

“Mali will never give up. Neither us nor the other countries of the Sahel. We are bleeding but we shall prevail,” Keita said, adding that “IFAD has enabled a people faced with the worst kind of attacks to uphold their values and keep their dignity.”

Roberto Gualtieri, Italian Minister for Economy and Finance said the commitment to achieving a world without poverty and hunger was more urgent than ever because of climate change. He said the solution is in the unique mandate of IFAD working in the “last mile of the value chain, improving economic prospects and food security in the most difficult contexts.”

Aksel Jakobsen, State Secretary of International Development for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also made an impassioned plea for immediate action calling IFAD “a crucial partner to bend the curve of hunger.”

“From Tonga to Timbuktu, smallholder farmers are struggling each day and this is totally unacceptable,” Jakobsen said. “Without food, there is no development. Together we need to take immediate action.”

This was echoed by Rodger Voorhies, who leads the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's efforts to alleviate hunger and poverty, who said "we need to move from an aspiration of change, to an action of change that we have promised to smallholders around the world."

"We have an obligation to focus our efforts and an opportunity to take action and change people's lives," Voorhies continued.

IFAD's Youth Advocate, award-winning choreographer Sherrie Silver and Afrobeats music star Mr Eazi, who are using their fame to give voice to rural young people and to "make farming cool", delivered the results of their Dance for Change campaign — a virtual dance petition calling for more investment in rural young people which became a viral sensation with 102 million views.

"Investment in rural agriculture equals investments in eradicating gender inequality, equals investments in eradicating unemployment," said Mr Eazi who recently had two of his songs selected by Beyoncé and featured on the latest Lion King soundtrack The Gift. "This one point of action goes towards reaching our goals for the decade," he added.

Sabrina Elba, Canadian actress and model of Somalian descent, closed the day saying that along with her husband, actor Idris Elba, "we are taking action and championing IFAD and zero hunger because we fully believe small-scale farmers can feed the world and should be at the forefront of the world's attention."

"We can't change policy, but you can," she told the Member States. "We can't invest more in IFAD but your governments can. We can all raise our voices and speak out for the poor rural people who are too often left behind. Investing in the future of rural people is an investment in our own future too."

IFAD operates in remote rural areas and highly vulnerable regions, where few aid agencies or international financial institutions venture. Today IFAD launched its Twelfth Replenishment - a year-long consultative process during which IFAD's Member States come together to agree strategic directions and mobilize funds for IFAD to provide as concessional loans and grants to developing countries.

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IFAD invests in rural people, empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience. Since 1978, we have provided US\$22.4 billion in grants and low-interest loans to projects that have reached an estimated 512 million people. IFAD is an international financial institution and a United Nations specialized agency based in Rome – the United Nations food and agriculture hub.

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