



IFAD's Statement

UNPFII XIV SESSION

Half-day discussion on the Pacific Region

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Madam Chair,

Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum, Indigenous Peoples'  
Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for giving me the floor.

On behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, I wish to inform you that the commitment of our organization to indigenous peoples' development in the Pacific is high on our agenda.

IFAD has been working in the Pacific since 1981. Portfolio of loans and grants to the Pacific region amount to a total of USD 125 million. In addition, the Indigenous

Peoples Assistance Facility supported three small projects focusing on traditional knowledge and climate changed adaptation.

IFAD is well aware of the challenges faced by indigenous peoples in the Pacific, and particularly by rural people, in relation to climate change, loss of traditional knowledge with respect to natural resources management, loss of biodiversity, and deteriorating social, economic and cultural conditions that threaten indigenous food systems – very often leading to deteriorating health of indigenous peoples.

The strategic objectives of the IFAD's programme for the Pacific Islands are:

- Rural people in remote areas and outer islands are producing, consume and market more local foods in environmentally sustainable ways
- Rural people are earning more from farm activities, non-farm activities and employment

At present we are financing projects in nine countries including Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tonga. Two new projects, for Fiji and the Solomon Islands were submitted for approval to IFAD Executive Board last week.

Madam Chair,

just to share with you an example of our work: a project in Cicia (pronounced Thee thia) Island in Fiji supported organic agriculture, as opted by the island, in an effort to protect livelihoods and the environment. With support from IFAD and partners on the ground, the island has declared that only organic agriculture will be practised. The IFAD-funded initiative offered a low-cost way to achieve organic certification that will provide remote rural communities with access to niche markets in the urban area. The project focuses particularly on virgin coconut oil, which is currently being produced by Cicia (thee thia) women.

During the process of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD, whereby Asia and the Pacific were combined in the same regional event, representatives from the Pacific

requested a separate workshop, highlighting their distinctive cultures and traditions, their land and sea area and their high biodiversity. IFAD responded positively to this request, and in preparation for the second global meeting of the Forum at IFAD, a regional workshop was organized in the Pacific in November 2014.

The workshop was held in Fiji, in cooperation with Tebtebba Foundation and Pifon, and included 21 participants from nine countries in the Pacific, including indigenous peoples from New Zealand and Hawaii, who shared experiences and good practices. They identified challenges and opportunities in livelihoods derived from production of indigenous food systems in rural areas. They also provided suggestions regarding indicators of well-being for indigenous peoples related to a series of core themes, including land, territories and resources; free, prior and informed consent; traditional knowledge, seeds and medicine; and resilience, for IFAD to consider in its funded-projects.

IFAD likewise responded to the request for the Pacific to be represented with its own member in the steering committee of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum at IFAD.

In response to the recommendations that emerged during the regional workshop in the Pacific and the global meeting of the indigenous peoples' forum at IFAD, held last February in Rome, the Fund has taken on board the need to increase attention to indigenous food systems in all of its investment programmes in the Pacific. Dialogue with our partners in the Pacific from indigenous communities has made it clear to us that focussing on indigenous food systems is far more than a question of respecting the food traditions and cultural heritage of indigenous peoples. Indigenous food systems offer key solutions to two of the most acute problems facing the Pacific region today, climate change and the incidence of non-communicable diseases linked to malnutrition. Agricultural and natural resource management practices of indigenous communities in the Pacific embody a wealth of knowledge that the scientific community and development partners such as IFAD should support for the benefit of all.

Future interventions in the Pacific islands will prioritize support for indigenous peoples, rural youth and women; improvements in local food security and nutrition

and import substitution; development of market opportunities and income generation in rural areas; support for development of effective local governance, and adaptation to climate change in agriculture.

In support to the cyclone which affected Vanuatu in March, an emergency grant of USD 500,000 is being approved to help the affected population to whom goes our sincere solidarity.

We look forward to our strengthened partnership with indigenous peoples in the Pacific for the improvements of their livelihoods and the livelihoods of others who share challenges in food and agriculture in the region.

Thank you