

- Excellencies it is my distinguished pleasure to welcome you to this special celebration of International Rural Women's day.
- As you know, the United Nations' International Day of Rural Women celebrates and honours the role of rural women on October 15 each year.
- Today, with this event, we celebrate the women and girls who play a key role in transformation and resilience of rural economies and food systems. I am honoured to have two inspiring women from the field in my presence or on the screen. First, Ms Luz Haro Guanga, who is a strong advocate for rural women empowerment in Latin America and the Caribbean. Second, Ms Uwintije Goretti, who is an inspiring rural women farmer and an IFAD beneficiary from the The Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP RWEE) in Rwanda. I am looking forward to the insightful conversation we will have today
- The year 2022 has been marked by interlinked challenges affecting the whole world. The increase in global hunger and food insecurity reflect exacerbated inequalities across and within countries.
- According to [the 2022 Global Report on Food Crises Mid-Year Update](#), the number of people in food crises or worse is forecast to reach up to 205.1 million in 45 of the 53 countries. Of the estimated 828 million people globally, who were affected by hunger in 2021, around three-in-five (59%) were women, according to [a CARE report](#). That is equivalent to 150 million more women facing food insecurity than men. Since 2018, the disparity between men's and women's food security has grown 8.4 times, accelerated in part by the pandemic and now to aggravate further with the war in Ukraine
- Even though women are most affected, we need to underline that they are not simple bystanders. Women have the capacity to be agents of change. Increasing women's participation and decision-making in the community and the household, reduces poverty and improves nutritional outcomes. [A recent research study from IFAD](#) proved that food systems interventions who take gender seriously and make the effort to transform existing gender norms and barriers may be more successful than interventions that target women but do not engage with the system as a whole.
- What is needed to bridge the gap for rural women? Creating decent jobs, entrepreneurship training and access to education, infrastructure and finance is key. Protecting rural women from unofficial forms of work, enhancing social protection, ensuring their voices are heard and closing the representation gap are key elements needed for transformative action, if the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is to be achieved. IFAD and CFS's continued efforts to promote and ensure gender equality through decent work and productive employment, enhancing the effectiveness of poverty reduction and food security initiatives, as well as climate change adaptation efforts.
- One program that I am particularly proud of is the Joint Programme on Accelerating Progress Towards the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women (JP RWEE) initiative. It aims to secure rural women's livelihoods and rights, address the key challenges they face, and create sustainable development. It has reached nearly 80,000 women in seven countries so far, and a new phase of the programme is set to begin in five additional countries during 2022. One of the many ways it does this is through climate-smart agriculture: a set of practices that help female farmers adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.
- It is time for change, to do more, and to do it better. At the heart of the SDG pledge of "leaving no one behind" there is leaving no women behind anywhere. Gender equality is a fundamental human right, a building block for social justice and an economic necessity. Recent

rises in conflict and climate shocks highlights more than ever the importance of rural women farmers in our efforts to build resilient communities. Social protection policies will be needed to mitigate unintended consequences of repurposing support on the most vulnerable, particularly women and children.

- It is a critical factor for the achievement of all internationally agreed development goals as well as it is a goal in and of itself. Therefore, reducing rural poverty and improving the lives of rural women, girls and their families from IFAD's and RBAs' perspective requires continued investments in rural women and in their empowerment.
- Gender is one of IFAD's key mainstreaming themes and is thus mainstreamed across its entire investment portfolio and central to IFAD's Mandate and a principle of engagement.
- The Rome-based Agencies (FAO, IFAD and WFP) and the CFS, have a key role to facilitate gender transformative processes in partnership with the development community and governmental institutions towards achieving food security, improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.
- In line with that, together with the other RBAs, we have been actively involved in the development of the Voluntary Guidelines on Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Empowerment and we hope to resume their finalization process. With these brief remarks I am sure that today's session will be a fruitful and constructive dialogue with these women leaders who are key agents of change working to close the gap on gender inequality.
- I am pleased to present a video message from Ms. Uwintije Goretti from Rwanda , followed by a statement by Ms. Luz Haro Guanga from Ecuador.
- *Video plays*
- Now I am pleased to pass the floor to Ms. Luz Haro Guanga. Ms. Haro Guanga you have the floor.