

## **CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

### **Africa Food Prize - Media Statement**

**Kanayo F. Nwanze, IFAD President**

**7 September 2016**

1. Good morning. Thank you all for coming here today.
2. First let me say that I feel very honoured to be awarded the inaugural Africa Food Prize, and am grateful to the panel that selected me. I am proud not just for myself, but for the organization that I head, the International Fund for Agricultural Development or IFAD, and for the African rural people themselves. Without them I would not be here. Without them, perhaps many of you would not be here. Because the rural smallholder farmers of Africa grow much of the food we use to feed ourselves and our families.
3. I have been involved in agriculture all my professional life. As a research scientist, I saw the power of innovation and discovery to change people's lives. As President of IFAD, I have seen the power of investments – not handouts – to help individuals and whole communities change their

future, giving their children education, opportunity, better nutrition and hope.

4. It is always the people themselves who matter most. It is they who use the knowledge, the finance, the new opportunities to make a better life. Development isn't something you do for or to people, it is something that they do for themselves.
5. When I first began to say that small-scale farms were businesses just like large-scale operations, my views were considered at best romantic and at worst foolish. Few senior business or government leaders seriously believed that farmers working small plots of land could be considered part of the "business community." Today, the concept of smallholder farms as a business has become commonplace. I take a lot of satisfaction from that. I have worked hard to promote this idea, and to encourage our partners and the private sector to do so as well.
6. There is more to do, of course, and especially here in Africa, I am sorry to say. When you consider that the continent imports \$35 billion worth of food a year; that grain losses due to inadequate storage are worth up to \$4

billion a year; that only about 6 per cent of total cultivated land in Africa is irrigated compared with 37 per cent in Asia . . . then you realize how woefully Africa is failing to live up to its potential.

7. We need to focus our investments on rural people, and get them the resources they need—technology, knowledge, infrastructure, access to finance and to markets and secure land rights. When they have the resources, they will lead their own development and transform their rural areas. We need partnerships, we need leaders in government and the private sector to start believing in African smallholder agriculture and rural people.
8. We need the leadership, the institutions and the rule of law to create the enabling environment. Illicit outflows from the continent cost Africa \$69 billion in 2014 alone. I have been open in calling upon leaders to live up to their commitments - with actions, not words.
9. Let me conclude by saying I feel honoured to receive this prize, and I hope that my efforts will inspire others. Thank you.