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## **UN official urges focus on rural development to lift millions out of poverty**



President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development Kanayo F. Nwanze addresses the agency's Governing Council. Photo: IFAD

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A top United Nations official today [committed](#) to pull up to 90 million people out of poverty by 2015 and help small farmers and all those in rural areas to realize their potential in eliminating hunger and promoting development.

“Smallholder farmers can feed themselves and they can help feed the world,” Kanayo F. Nwanze, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)), said in his opening [address](#) to the agency's Governing Council.

“The time has come for smallholders to play their rightful role in contributing to economic growth and food security,” he told the gathering of world leaders, global policy-makers, farmers and government ministers.

Mr. Nwanze noted that agriculture is a growth industry. With the world population expected to pass 9 billion by 2050, demand for food is guaranteed to rise in the coming years.

“Our job is to make it possible for small farmers, and everyone living in rural areas, to be part of this growth industry by realising their potential. As more people migrate to the cities, those who stay behind will become even more important, because agriculture is primarily a rural activity.

“When these farmers are recognized as small entrepreneurs, when they have access to better resources and incentives, and when they have access to markets and an enabling environment, they can transform their communities, their own lives, and indeed the world,” he stated.

He called for “perseverance, patience and determination” to reduce rural poverty and create climate-smart ways for smallholders to build their resilience, adding that the Fund has a critical role to play helping smallholders adapt to a changing climate while also reducing emissions and safeguarding the natural resource base.

The IFAD chief highlighted the importance of women, who shoulder a heavy workload in rural areas, and called on leaders to work with the agency to harness the tremendous energy of youth and provide opportunities for them, particularly in rural areas.

“We will need the young people of today to be the farmers of tomorrow,” he added.

IFAD, based in Rome, is both a UN agency and an international financial institution, and since 1978 it has invested about \$13.7 billion in grants and low-interest loans to developing countries to help the rural poor grow and sell more food, increase their incomes and escape poverty.

Mr. Nwanze pledged to expand partnerships with the private sector to make, “smallholder farmers more visible business partners in their efforts to feed the world.”

He applauded member States for their commitment to IFAD’s ninth replenishment of resources of \$1.5 billion in new contributions to finance agriculture and rural development projects across the developing world.

“Agriculture and rural development is essential for lasting food and nutrition security,” he stressed. “It is a pathway to employment, wealth creation and economic growth. It is the basis for social cohesion, gender empowerment and equality. It is the foundation for global peace and security.

“Together, we have the ability to create a better future for millions of people,” he stated.

The two-day session of the 35th Governing Council features presentations by various personalities, including President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, who will address how climate-smart agriculture can feed a growing world population, and Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill & Melinda

Gates Foundation, who will share his perspective on the importance of agriculture and how sustainable productivity improvements can reduce poverty in developing countries.

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