

UNCTAD World Investment Forum 2018

Responsible Agricultural Investment

Opening remarks

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AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Minister,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my pleasure to welcome to you to this session on Responsible Agricultural Investment. This session is co-organized between the four agencies of the inter-agency working group (IAWG): UNCTAD, the World Bank Group, FAO and IFAD.

The IAWG, endorsed by the UN General Assembly, the G8 and the G20, has been working together on the issue of responsible investment since 2009. At that time, investment in agriculture suddenly came to the fore, following the global food price spike. The subsequent rush to invest in agriculture in developing countries presented new opportunities for job creation, value-addition, technology transfer and linkages of smallholders with global markets. It also posed many challenges, notably with respect to land tenure, labour rights, gender equality and environmental degradation.

The Working Group was tasked to examine the topic of responsible agricultural investment to improve understanding of the impacts of such investments and to provide recommendations and advice to all stakeholders. Over the past decade much has been achieved by the four agencies, collectively and individually. A significant body of evidence on what works and what does not work has been generated and used to inform a range of guidance documents and technical assistance programmes.

The Working Group has collaborated with many partner organizations: governments, the private sector, civil society, other international organisations, and farmers' organisations. I am pleased to see so many of the organisations we

have worked with present in the room today, as well as many organisations who have made their own important contributions to the debate.

Achieving Zero Hunger will require significant increases in investment. The importance of the agricultural sector, particularly in least-developed countries, implies its development cuts across a range of other SDGs: from ending poverty and ensuring decent work, to ensuring gender equality and addressing climate change, and more. We meet today to take stock of progress that has been made on determining how to ensure that agricultural investments have a positive impact on the achievement of the SDGs. And we meet to look to the future – to hear your ideas about what challenges remain and what future directions the work on responsible agricultural investment should take.

We have a long list of excellent speakers and limited time, so without further ado, I will pass the floor to Ms. Gerda Verburg, United Nations Assistant Secretary General and Co-Ordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement, to moderate the first panel.

Once again, I welcome you all and look forward to a lively debate.