

Multi-Stakeholder Forum: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls

Panel 1: Ensuring rural women's land rights and tenure security and strengthening food security and nutrition for rural women and girls

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Thank you, Madam Chair.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

- I have the honor to introduce the first topic of this important session to be addressed by a panel of distinguished speakers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- The empowerment of rural women and girls is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDGs 1 and 2, on ending poverty and hunger.
- Women are often the backbone of the rural economy, especially in the developing world. If you look at labour alone, women represent on average 43% of the agricultural work force in developing countries.
- For rural women and men, land is often the most important household asset to support agricultural production and ensure food security and nutrition.
- However, women are significantly disadvantaged relative to men for all dimensions of land tenure: reported land ownership, documented ownership, land management and land-related economic rights.
- Globally, for example, less than 15% of all landholders are women.

- Numerous studies have shown that women's land rights are correlated with better outcomes for women and their families, including increased bargaining power in the household, better child nutrition, and higher protection from gender based violence.
- Closing the gender gap in agriculture would also generate significant gains for the agriculture sector and for society. If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by up to 30% and raise the total agricultural output in developing countries by up to 4%.

Ladies and gentlemen,

- I would also like to highlight that the Voluntary Guidelines on the responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forestry in the context of food security includes a key principle for implementation on Gender Equality and makes specific provisions to improve gender equality in both formal and customary systems, including through amending discriminatory inheritance and property laws. Implementing these guidelines will help strengthen women's access to land and empower them.
- We must also remember that no single organization or government has the capacity to embark on this work alone.
- Partnership involving governments, UN entities, civil society, academia, and the private sector among others are key to strengthening women's land rights and promoting gender equitable land tenure. This is why a multi-stakeholder forum like this one here today is so crucial for rural transformation and the empowerment of rural women and girls.
- In concluding, I would like to highlight four questions to the panelists to guide our discussion on this topic:
 1. What legal and policy reforms have resulted in rural women's equal access to, control over and ownership of land and other productive resources?

2. How can government and other actors work with communities to address discriminatory customary laws and practices that curtail women's land and inheritance rights?
 3. What are examples of national policies that have increased rural women's and girls' access to food and nutrition of adequate quality and quantity?
 4. What are examples of effective partnerships and multi-stakeholder practices that have strengthened rural women's and girls' voice, leadership and participation and facilitated dialogue with rural women's and civil society organizations?
- I look forward to the fruitful discussion.
 - Thank you.