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**STATEMENT OF MR. JAMES CARRUTHERS
ASSISTANT PRESIDENT, PROGRAM MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
TO THE GEF COUNCIL MEETING
20 NOVEMBER 2003, WASHINGTON, DC**



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I am pleased to address the GEF Council in my new role as the Assistant President of IFAD's Program Management Department. As a former member of the GEF Council representing Canada, I have long had a keen interest in further developing the growing collaboration between GEF and IFAD. As the focal point for GEF within IFAD, I want to take this opportunity to reiterate IFAD's commitment to strengthening our partnership with GEF, and in this regard, I am pleased to inform you that we are taking a number of new steps to further increase our capacity to respond to this expanding collaboration.

The President of IFAD, in his most recent addresses to the GEF Assembly in Beijing and to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, reaffirmed the basis of our approach to rural poverty: that environment and development are inextricably linked. He stated that programs against poverty, hunger and environmental degradation are mutually reinforcing processes that must advance as one if they are to have a lasting and significant impact. We are, therefore, pleased to note GEF's designation of land degradation as a new focal area, as well as its role as a financing mechanism of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification.

IFAD has much experience in the broad areas of rural poverty and land degradation, more specifically in community-based natural resource management and poverty alleviation. We also have the internal ability to mobilize an accelerated flow of resources and manage projects and grants. It is for these reasons that we were selected as an Executing Agency by GEF and a valuable partner in this expanding focal area of land degradation. IFAD has already invested \$3.5 billion in drylands development and is the host institution of the Global Mechanism, which rationalizes the allocation of existing aid to combat land degradation and mobilizes additional resources for the UNCCD. We clearly see that the GM complements the role that GEF plays with regard to implementing the Convention.

Over the past two years, IFAD has identified and implemented GEF-eligible projects that combine global environmental concerns with national sustainable development objectives. We have gained tremendous experience in addressing environmental problems while responding to the challenge of poverty eradication and land degradation at the community level. At present, we have five projects in the GEF pipeline that are in various stages of development, these are in Honduras, Mali, Kenya, Brazil and China. In addition, we are preparing GEF-eligible components in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Venezuela. *(Please see attached table for more details on the status of these projects.)*

We are gaining additional experience with the challenges in GEF's approval process and project management. We are addressing these challenges to enhance our role as an Executing Agency and are working closely with other Executing and Implementing Agencies to better manage our engagement with GEF. We have become members of the Steering Committee on United Nation's Environmental Program's MSP Project to develop guidelines for OP 15 projects and the GEF inter-agency task force on land degradation, and joined the Multi-lateral Finance Institutions' Environment Group to contribute to the harmonization of environmental procedures and policies. In all these fora, IFAD provides strategic contributions to wide-reaching environmental issues, as well as specialized policy and technical guidance relating to rural poverty and drylands management.

We at IFAD look forward to a strengthened and dynamic partnership with GEF to achieve our common goals of addressing global environmental and rural poverty issues. To this end, echoing the recommendations of the recent Review of Experience of Executing Agencies under Expanded Opportunities, we strongly endorse GEF's granting to IFAD and other Executing Agencies direct access to the full range of funding so that we may carry out projects in the fields of our comparative advantage. We will ensure closer coordination between GEF's programming and business planning processes and IFAD's own processes. These steps, along with other recommendations outlined in the Review, will only serve to reinforce the already robust partnership between GEF and IFAD.

I thank you for the opportunity to address the Council.