

5 February 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
on the Rural Poverty Report 2001: The Challenge of Ending Rural
Poverty Release Luncheon**

We have gathered here to launch the "Rural Poverty Report 2001: The Challenge of Ending Rural Poverty" of the International Fund for Agricultural Development. I should like to congratulate IFAD for commissioning this report. It makes a significant contribution to the implementation of the Millennium Summit, in which 147 heads of state or government, and representatives from 191 nations, pledged to halve extreme poverty by the year 2015.

The report clearly points out, that to reach this goal, the international community needs to focus on the specific needs of the rural poor. After all, the vast majority of the extremely poor - almost 1 billion men, women and children - live in rural areas. Poverty in rural areas differs from that in urban areas, and therefore, different approaches are needed.

For the international community, a specific contribution of the Report, is its clear assessment of what constitutes rural poverty within the context of a globalised world. It identifies approaches that empower the rural poor to make better lives for themselves, their families, and their communities.

These fresh assessments will help us to combat rural hunger and poverty on a sustainable basis, and to steer international development towards the needs of the rural poor.

I am confident that the findings of this report we are launching today will also contribute and enlighten the dialogue and discussions at the forthcoming Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Conference on Financing for Development, the General Assembly's Special Session on HIV/AIDS, and many other fora.

I strongly believe that the Rural Poverty Report of IFAD will strengthen the overall international debate on and understanding of poverty alleviation, which will help us reach our goal, reiterated in the Millennium Summit, to halve extreme poverty during the next 15 years.