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PRESS RELEASE

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A Way Forward to Achieving Food and Nutrition Security in Africa

Addis Ababa—As a reflection of the growing political will to end hunger on the continent, the high-level seminar “Innovative Approaches to Meet the Hunger Millennium Development Goal (MDG) in Africa” was held yesterday as a precursor to the African Union (AU) Summit, which opens here today.

Three months ago, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) facilitated a conference, co-hosted by the Government of Uganda, on “Assuring Food and Nutrition Security in Africa by 2020.” A statement recommending specific actions that African stakeholders should take to realize this vision developed out of the conference deliberations and is being widely shared throughout Africa and amongst the broader international community.

The “Way Forward” statement, as it is known, identifies five high-priority actions:

- Strengthening governance and public accountability and ending conflicts;
- Fostering pro-poor economic growth through improved access to markets, better infrastructure, and greater trade competitiveness;

- Raising agricultural productivity, especially among small farmers;
- Improving nutrition and health, with due attention to HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis; and
- Building institutional and human capacity.

“I am hopeful these key priorities that came out of the April conference in Kampala will feed into and contribute to deliberations at the AU Summit and help provide the impetus needed to achieve the Hunger Millennium Development Goal,” said Dr. Joachim von Braun, Director General of IFPRI, during his presentation of the “Way Forward” statement at yesterday’s seminar.

“This new ‘road map’ will keep the struggle against hunger and malnutrition at the top of Africa’s agenda,” said Dr. John J. Otim, Senior Advisor to Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and chair of the 2020 Conference Advisory Committee (CAC). “When delegates from across Africa left the conference, they were determined to not lose momentum for real action to eradicate hunger and malnutrition. By sharing the outcomes of the conference, the political will and energy have actually been increasing.”

Members of the CAC have been hard at work since April building on the commitment and enthusiasm generated by the conference. In early June, Dr. Otim and Dr. Achi Atsain, CAC and IFPRI board member, called on President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, who participated in the 2020 conference along with President Museveni, and presented to them the “Way Forward” statement.

Presidents Museveni, Obasanjo, and Wade have thrown their support behind mainstreaming the ideas expressed in the statement and are carrying the conference messages to regional and international forums in Africa and elsewhere.

“I am confident that Africa is poised to make real progress in the fight against food and nutrition insecurity,” said Dr. Atsain, a leading academic and former policymaker in Côte d'Ivoire. “The importance of high-level Africans committing to actions to end hunger on our

continent cannot be overstated, and I am extremely pleased that there is political will at the highest level to build on the process and hope of the 2020 Conference.”

In mid-June, the three presidents traveled to the G8 Summit in the United States, where they called on industrialized countries to support Africa in implementing action to achieve its pro-poor agenda. Members of the G8 commended the 2020 Africa Conference and welcomed the high priority Africans are placing on raising agricultural productivity and promoting broad-based rural development.

“When the heads of state and government meet at this week’s AU Summit, we hope the enthusiasm generated by the 2020 Conference and the commitment behind the “Way Forward” statement will help lead to implementation of actions needed to achieve food and nutrition security on the continent,” said Dr. von Braun.

“A majority of the 500 participants at the 2020 Africa Conference, 60 percent, believed food security *can* be achieved in Africa by 2020, but only 40 percent believed it *will* be achieved,” said Rajul Pandya-Lorch, Head of IFPRI’s 2020 Vision Initiative. “The message is clear: a collective effort to assure political will and commitment at all levels is needed to undertake the necessary actions to end hunger and malnutrition in Africa.”

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The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) seeks sustainable solutions for ending hunger and poverty. IFPRI is one of the 15 Future Harvest Centers and receives its principal funding from 62 governments, private foundations, and international and regional organizations known as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. Please visit IFPRI’s website at <http://www.ifpri.org> and for more information on the 2020 Conference visit <http://www.ifpri.org/2020africaconference/index.htm>