

**Welcome Address by Director General of Centre on Integrated Rural Development for
Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), Dr. Cherdsak Virapat
The 43rd Anniversary of CIRDAP
Monday 25th July 2022, CIRDAP, Bangladesh**

Honorable Secretary of Rural Development and Cooperative Division, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Mr. Md. Moshir Rahman, Representatives of Embassies of the CIRDAP Member States, Head and Representatives of organization partners, CIRDAP Mentor and Staff, Ladies and Gentlemen

Greetings from the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP). It is an honor and pleasure to welcome each of you to attend the 43rd anniversary of CIRDAP and for launching the World Rural Development Day.

On behalf of the Chairman of the Governing Council of CIRDAP, H.E. Chalermchai Sri-on, Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives of the Royal Thai Government and the Secretariat, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives for hosting of CIRDAP, for the ongoing contributions and steadfast support throughout the last 43 years since the establishment in 1979. I wish to thank the staff of CIRDAP and colleagues who have been working on the preparation of this event.

CIRDAP was founded in 1979 as an Intergovernmental organization. The mission of CIRDAP is to promote Integrated Rural Development (IRD) to improve the quality of life of the far-reaching marginalized rural people, the ultimate beneficiaries of CIRDAP are farmers and rural communities. At present, it comprises 15 member states, namely; Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, IR Iran, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

The CIRDAP vision is to be a Centre of Excellence & multi-level platform for cooperation in knowledge transfer and capacity building for developing countries in integrated rural affairs for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific Region. Its mission is to provide technical support and promote innovative best practices on sustainable Integrated Rural Development amongst member countries in Asia-Pacific in order to improve the lives of the rural people.

During the last 43 years, CIRDAP has implemented training and research projects and activities in its member countries. In appreciation of its achievements, CIRDAP was recognized as one of the network centres of excellence of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) in research and training of human resource development. Since its inception in 1979, more than seven thousand (7,000) people have participated in and benefited from training and research activities. Many alumni are now leaders and senior officials in governments, development agencies, academia and research institutes.

Since 2020, CIRDAP has streamlined its work programmes through three thematic programmes that support sustainable and integrated rural development through policy formulation and development and inter-governmental cooperation in the region, namely; research on rural development and innovation, integrated rural development models and emerging issues including the Covid-19 pandemic, disaster risk reduction and resilience, and climate change impacts and water resource management, And through four cross-cutting programmes, namely; partnership

cooperation and promotion, training and education, information and communication and gender in integrated rural development that facilitate and support implementation of the thematic work programmes.

Through member countries, link institutes, IGOs, NGOs, Academic Institutions and Research organizations, CIRDAP implements collaborative projects and activities in the network, addressing issues of common concern and interest. CIRDAP also works in close cooperation with FAO, UN specialized agencies, international development partners and other regional and national organizations to implement its programme activities.

On 21st April 2022, the Governing Council of CIRDAP endorsed the initiative to establish the World Rural Development Day on 6th July 2022 and ask the Secretariat to start the process for the UN International Day through FAO for the UN General Assembly meeting at the same time. It is worth noting that the date of 6 July has been proposed to UN FAO on 15 December 2020 and to CIRDAP members for the establishment. The proposal can also be proposed to the UNGA directly by the member states to accelerate the process.

According to the UN Populations Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNECOSOC) report 2018, the percentage of rural populations is 44.7 which is about 3.413 billion people. For the CIRDAP member countries, the percentage of rural populations is 60.9 percent which is about 1.536 billion people. Therefore, rural still remains the main focus for the policy makers in Asia and the Pacific Region. Poverty alleviation, food security, nutrition, local governance, trade, livelihoods, access the basic needs, sustainable development and efficient use of natural resources in rural areas are still the burning issues of Asia and the Pacific Region and of the world that require special and immediate attention to sustainable development. It is estimated that about 87% of the world's 500 million small farmers are in Asia and the Pacific region. It is vital to help increase economic activity and employment opportunities in the fight against poverty in rural areas where these small-scale and subsistent farmers live. According to FAO, almost 690 million people in the world are undernourished in 2019, and almost 46% of all children under five of South Asia is underweight. On average, underweight prevalence among children in rural areas is almost double that of children in urban areas in the developing world. According to SDG Progress Report 2021 by UNESCAP, the Asia-Pacific Region may achieve less than 10% of the SDG targets by 2030.

It is all part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all UN members to end poverty and other deprivations, reduce inequality, spur economic growth, tackle climate change and sustainable management of our terrestrial ecosystems, forests, oceans and resources therein.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly highlighted the link between diseases and climate change, oceans acidification, and biodiversity loss, with the poor suffering the most in all cases. Moving ahead, we need to create pathways that provide for equitable economic growth and sustainable use of the planet's natural resources. This clearly emphasizes the need for a renewed focus on achieving the SDGs, as the global blueprint to end poverty, protect our planet, and ensure prosperity. Along with inadequate health systems, the pandemic has also exposed a few other challenges such as lack of access to education, failure to reach clean water and sanitation targets, and inadequate food security. These are all development gaps that the SDGs are trying to address. After COVID-19, every developing country will need to reassess progress in achieving the SDGs for equitable growth, conservation of natural resources, and action to reduce the impact of climate change (ADB, 2021).

The establishment of the World Rural Development Day is to call for global attention and response and to accelerate actions on rural development to meet the Sustainable Development Goals in 2030. It is to inform and to remind everyone on his/her role and responsibility for collaborative actions on integrated rural development as outlined in the SDGs. It is also a chance to celebrate and appreciate what the rural areas have provided us with resource based and natural beauty that maintain ecosystem balance and support for food production, socio-economic and livelihoods. It is the day to celebrate together to ensure that no one will be left behind and thus rural development shall be everyone duty and responsibility. Activities can be arts, cleanups, educational programmes, exhibitions, festivals, fish stocking, women and youth engagements, lectures & webinars, plant trees, pledges and commitments, recreation & sports and others.

CIRDAP hopes that the World Rural Development Day will help inform the public on important role of rural areas and develop worldwide movements to improve the quality of life of the far-reaching marginalized rural people who are living in our prestigious areas in which improving of their well-beings will ensure our human survival.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let us celebrate together our past achievements and continue to have our strong commitment on our future actions which will improve the quality of live and economic development of rural people. On this occasion, I would like to declare the establishment of the World Rural Development Day at CIRDAP. I hope that the Bangladesh Government will be able to propose it as the UN International Day to the upcoming UN General Assembly in New York.

Finally, I would like to thank all our distinguished guests for sharing this moment of happiness with us on this special occasion.