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粮食及
农业组织

Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Organisation des Nations
Unies pour l'alimentation
et l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
сельскохозяйственная организация
Объединенных Наций

Organización de las
Naciones Unidas para la
Alimentación y la Agricultura

منظمة
الأغذية والزراعة
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CONFERENCE

Fortieth Session

Rome, 3-8 July 2017

Message of His Holiness Pope Francis

*Mr Chairperson of the Conference
Director General of FAO
Prime Minister of Italy
Excellencies, Ambassadors and permanent representatives
Ladies and Gentlemen.*

I appreciate the reception I have received and the words of welcome addressed to me and it is a pleasure to read out the message that His Holiness Pope Francis sends to the Conference.

Mr Chairperson:

I am pleased to address my respectful and cordial greetings to you, as well as to all the Representatives of the FAO Member States gathered here for the Fortieth Conference of the Organisation.

I would also like to extend my greeting to the Director General of FAO and the Directors of the other International Organisations present at this meeting, which has been called to find specific solutions for the food and agriculture sector, on which the prospects of millions of people depend.

Being unable to be with you this time, in keeping with the long tradition which dates back to the inception of FAO headquarters in Rome, I have asked the Cardinal Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin, to deliver my words of encouragement and support and express my esteem and consideration for the arduous task ahead of you.

The Holy See closely follows international activity and would like to play its part in directing it, not to accomplish progress or obtain theoretical development objectives but to achieve real eradication of hunger and malnutrition. We are all aware that it is not enough to seek to ensure that all receive their daily bread; rather we have to recognise that everybody has the right to it and should therefore benefit from it. If the goals we have set are still far out of reach, this is in large part due to the lack of a culture of solidarity, which is unable to establish itself in international activities that are too often in thrall to the pragmatism of statistics and a quest for efficiency and devoid of the idea of sharing.

The commitment of each country to increase their domestic levels of nutrition, to improve agricultural activity and the condition of the rural population is materialised by boosting the agricultural sector, increasing production and promoting effective distribution of food. But that is not enough. Indeed, if these goals are to be achieved, then we must never lose sight of the fact that the right of every human being to be free of poverty and hunger depends on the duty incumbent on the entire human family to offer real help to those in need.

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Thus, when a country is unable to offer an adequate response because of their level of development, their conditions of poverty, because of climate change or insecurity, FAO and other intergovernmental institutions must have the capacity to intervene specifically in order to undertake appropriate solidarity actions. Based on the realisation that the goods provided by God, the Creator, are for all, it is urgent for solidarity to become the philosophy driving any form of cooperation in international relations.

If we look at the current situation in the world, it does not make comforting viewing. However, we cannot only be concerned or maybe just resigned. This difficult moment should also make us more aware that hunger and malnutrition are not only natural or structural phenomena affecting specific geographical regions; rather they are the result of a more complex situation of underdevelopment caused by the inertia of many and the selfishness of a few. Wars, terrorism and the forced displacement of people, which each time impede or complicate cooperation activities, are not the result of fatalism but the consequence of concrete decisions. This is a complex mechanism affecting above all the most vulnerable populations, who are excluded not only from productive processes but who are often also required to leave their land in search of refuge and a better life. Similarly, aid for poor countries is also determined by decisions taken in free will and conscience, and this aid is constantly diminishing, despite the repeated appeals generated by the increasingly destructive crisis situations seen around the world.

We have to bear in mind that in these cases, the freedom of choice of each individual goes hand in hand with solidarity towards all, in relation to their needs, fulfilling in good faith the commitments undertaken or announced. To this end, and also guided by a desire to encourage Governments, I would like join the effort with a symbolic contribution to the FAO programme to provide seeds to rural families living in areas where the effects of conflict and drought are both being felt. This is an additional gesture to the work being done by the Church, in accordance with its vocation to stand alongside the poor of the earth and ensure the effective commitment of all towards them.

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* calls on this commitment when it reiterates the concept of food security as an imperative objective. But only efforts motivated by genuine solidarity will be capable of reducing the number of people who are malnourished and in extreme poverty. This is a great challenge for FAO and for the all the institutions of the international community. A challenge in which the Church is also involved on the front line.

Therefore, I would like to see the sessions of this Conference give a new impulse to the activity of the Organisation and provide the instruments that are needed and awaited by millions of our brothers, who see the actions of FAO not only as a technical contribution to increase resources and distribute the fruits of production but also as a concrete, at times unique, sign of fraternity that allows them to have confidence in the future.

May the blessing of Almighty God, who is rich in mercy, be bestowed upon you and your work and give you the strength you need to contribute to making real progress for the human family.

The Vatican, 3 July 2017

Pope Francis