

SOVEREIGN ORDER OF MALTA

Message from H.E. Jean-Pierre Mazéry, Grand Chancellor of SMOM on the occasion of the Summit on World Food Security (16-18 November 2009, Rome)

Distinguished Heads of State and Government

The Honourable Mr. Jacques Diouf, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a privilege to be here today and I welcome the opportunity to address you at the World Summit on Food Security. On behalf of the Grand Chancellor of the Sovereign Order of Malta, H.E. Jean-Pierre Mazéry, it is my pleasure to bring his message to you.

“The Sovereign Order of Malta wishes to thank the Director General of FAO, as well as the donors who have generously given the necessary funds, for organizing this important meeting of the international community which is an indispensable step in the right direction. The Order of Malta recognizes and welcomes the action of FAO, along with its sister agencies in Rome, the World Food Programme and IFAD, as central to the United Nations efforts to achieve food security.

The world has suffered from hunger for far too long, and with the financial and economic crisis and climate change, this calamity is now affecting over one billion people, and causing the death of 6 million children every year. In short, hunger has reached scandalous, unbearable proportions and the time has come for action. Over the past year, we have seen the world taking several steps in the right direction, and the latest one is the adoption by acclamation of the Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security on 16 November 2009, which encapsulates in its five principles the level of consensus reached by the international community on this crucial issue.

The Order of Malta welcomes the Declaration and hopes that it will be the opening salvo for real action on the ground. The premises for decisive action are finally in place. First and most important, a Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition has been set up, progress is made in the realization of the right to food and attention has at last been directed to achieving an adequate level of assistance to the production of food, starting with the US\$ 20 billion over 3 years pledged by the G8 at l'Aquila.

However, this is not enough, and we hope that more support will be forthcoming. We would particularly welcome that greater attention be placed on nutrition issues.

At the Order of Malta, as we are involved primarily in medical assistance around the world, the problem of hunger acquires for us the additional dimension of a human health crisis: we should not forget that food is intimately linked to health, and a sufficient and balanced diet of nutritious food is the key to human health. Extreme hunger causes death, as has been so often recalled in this meeting, but one should not forget the devastations caused by malnutrition. There is a wide variety of nutrition disorders and they cause a broad range of damages, from permanent mental impairment for the individual to losses in economic growth for the community, through decreased labour productivity and reduced life expectancy.

We are currently engaged in talks with FAO to launch cooperation activities in this area – I am referring to our programme for the establishment of vegetable gardens around our hospitals in various countries in Africa, starting in Togo and Benin, with the objective of improving the nutrition of local rural populations – and we are looking forward to our increased involvement with partners from the United Nations and elsewhere in the fight against malnutrition.

Second, and essential from an institutional point of view, the Committee on Food Security housed in FAO has been reformed and strengthened and is now an appropriate vehicle for formulating and implementing a world food security policy. What is crucial in

this reform is that for the first time it ensures that all stakeholders participate in the achievement of food security, from the highest levels of government to NGOs, professional and farmer organizations. The Order of Malta looks forward to participating in the CFS activities, in particular contributing with its experience in human nutrition and health issues.

Three, the Order of Malta welcomes, *inter alia*, the institution of a Panel of High Level Experts to provide the necessary scientific support ensuring technically appropriate measures are taken. Research and improvement in statistics and monitoring systems are essential for any action on the ground. In particular, since the Order of Malta is involved in emergency activities around the globe and present in every crisis, whether man-made or natural disasters, we are especially interested in seeing improvements brought to the early warning and forecasting systems for food insecurity and vulnerability.

To conclude, the Order of Malta is pleased at the progress made so far, in particular with respect to improved institutional arrangements. As the Holy Father noted in his address to this assembly, quoting from his Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, food production was not so much a problem of resources as an institutional one; as He said, one needs a long-term, structural approach to solve the problem. The road is long, strewn with difficulties, but the way forward is, as He reminded us, linked to ethics: we need to move away from an egotistical consumer mental frame to a moral and humanitarian approach.”

Delivered by H.E. Giuseppe Bonanno di Linguaglossa
Ambassador of the Sovereign Order of Malta
Permanent Observer to the Rome-based UN Agencies