



Change the future of migration. Invest in food security and rural development.

### Speech by Pope Francis

Mr Director-General, distinguished authorities, ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you for the invitation and the welcoming remarks addressed to me by Director-General José Graziano da Silva. I warmly greet the authorities who join us here as well as representatives of the Member States and those who are able to follow our meeting from FAO offices throughout the world.

I extend a special greeting to the G7 Ministers of Agriculture attending today in the wake of their Summit, where they discussed matters demanding accountability with regard to development and production as well as with regard to the international community as a whole.

1. The celebration of this World Food Day unites us in remembering that far-off date of 16 October 1945, when governments determined to eliminate hunger in the world by developing farming and this led to the establishment of FAO. That was a period of severe food insecurity and massive population shifts, with millions of people seeking a haven where they could survive the miseries and hardships caused by war.

In light of this, reflecting on the effects of food security on human mobility means returning to the commitment that brought FAO into being and renewing that commitment. The current situation calls for greater accountability at all levels. We must ensure the necessary production or fair distribution of the fruits of the earth — that goes without saying —, but above all we must guarantee all human beings the right to eat as much as they need, as well as the right to take part in decisions that affect them and to achieve their aspirations without being separated from their loved ones.

The credibility of the entire international system is at stake when faced with a goal of such importance. We know that cooperation is increasingly affected by half-hearted commitments, which even limit aid in emergencies. Because we hear about deaths from starvation or people abandoning their own lands every day in the news, there is a risk of us becoming indifferent. We therefore urgently need to find new ways to turn existing opportunities into a guarantee that everyone will be able to face the future with well-founded trust, not fleeting illusions.

Within international relations, there is apparently an increasing ability to meet the expectations of the human family; scientists and technologists also help by examining problems and suggesting appropriate solutions. But these new achievements are unable to prevent the exclusion of most of the world's population: many fall victim to malnutrition, wars and climate change. Many lack work or basic necessities and are forced to leave their land, exposing themselves to many and terrible forms of exploitation. Pressing technology into the service of development is certainly one way to go, but only if we are able to take effective action to reduce the number of people going hungry or to control the phenomenon of forced migration.

2. We can only tackle the relationship between hunger and migration if we get to the root of the problem. Studies conducted by the United Nations and other civil society organizations agree that two main obstacles must be overcome: conflicts and climate change.



How can we overcome *conflicts*? International law gives us the means of preventing them or resolving them quickly, preventing them from becoming prolonged and causing famine and tearing apart the social fabric. We need only think of peoples afflicted by wars that have already lasted for decades and that could have been avoided or at least halted, yet they continue to spread disastrous and cruel effects such as food insecurity and forced displacement of people. Goodwill and dialogue is needed to put a stop to conflict and we need full commitment to gradual and systematic disarmament as laid down in the *United Nations Charter*, and to remedy the deadly scourge of arms trafficking. What good is it to report that millions of people are victims of hunger and malnutrition as a result of conflicts if we do not work effectively for peace and disarmament?

As for *climate change*, we see its consequences every day. Scientific knowledge teaches us how to address the problems; and the international community has also developed the necessary legal instruments, such as the Paris Agreement, which some are unfortunately moving away from. However, we are again beginning to see disregard for the delicate balance between ecosystems, the presumption that the planet's limited resources can be manipulated and controlled – and greed born of profit. We must therefore strive to achieve a pragmatic and practical consensus if we wish to prevent the devastating effects that will continue to rain down on the poorest and most defenceless people. It is our duty to call for a change in lifestyles, in the use of resources, in production criteria and even in consumption, which involves more and more food being lost and wasted. We cannot be satisfied with saying “someone else will deal with it”.

I think these are the premises for any serious debate on food security related to the phenomenon of migration. Hunger is clearly caused by wars and climate change and we need to stop talking about it as though it were an incurable disease. Recent forecasts drawn up by your own experts suggest that global cereal production will increase to levels that will allow world reserves to be built up. This finding gives us hope and teaches us that results can be achieved if you work towards meeting needs and forget about speculation. Food resources are often exposed to speculation, which measures them solely by the yardstick of the financial benefit they bring to major producers or estimated consumption and not people's real needs. This exacerbates conflicts and wastefulness and forces more and more of the most disadvantaged people on the planet to seek a future far from their homelands.

3. Given this situation, we can and must change course (see Encyclical *Laudato si'*, 53; 61; 163;

202). Faced with an increased demand for food, the fruits of the earth must be available to all. For some, reducing the number of mouths to feed would be enough to resolve the problem. Yet this is a false solution if we take into account the level of food waste and consumption patterns that squander so many resources. It is easy to cut down but sharing involves a change and this is challenging.

For this reason, I would like us all to consider this question: would it be too much to introduce into the language of international cooperation a category of love, meaning donating freely, equal treatment, solidarity, a culture of giving, fraternity and mercy? These words effectively express the real meaning of the term “humanitarian”, which is commonly used in international affairs. Love your brothers and sisters, giving freely without expecting anything in return. This principle of the Gospels finds expression in many cultures and religions and translates as the *principle of humanity* in the language of international relations.



We need diplomacy and multilateral institutions to feed and nurture this ability to love, because it is the main way of guaranteeing global human security as well as food security. We cannot restrict ourselves to acting only if others do or only feeling pity, because pity is only a sticking plaster while love inspires justice and it is essential to ensure a just social order between different entities that aspire to mutual encounters. Loving means helping each country increase production and achieve food self-sufficiency. Loving means thinking up new development and consumption models and adopting policies that do not worsen the situation of less advanced peoples or their external dependence. Loving means not continuing to divide the human family between those who enjoy what is superfluous and those who lack what is necessary.

The commitment of diplomacy has shown us (recent events offer a good example) that we can stop using weapons of mass destruction. We are all aware of the destructiveness of such instruments. But are we equally aware of the effects of poverty and exclusion? How can we stop people who are prepared to risk everything, entire generations who could disappear because they lack their daily bread or are the victims of violence or climate change? They move to where they can see light or see some hope in their lives. They cannot be stopped by physical, economic, legal or ideological barriers. Only consistent application of the *principle of humanity* can stop them. But instead we see that public development aid is being cut and the activity of multilateral institutions is restricted, while we fall back on bilateral agreements that mean cooperation is subject to compliance with particular agendas and alliances or simply to a fleeting peace. Yet management of human mobility really needs coordinated and systematic intergovernmental action in accordance with existing international standards, all done with love and intelligence. Its aim should be a meeting of peoples that enriches everyone and generates union and debate, not exclusion or vulnerability.

Now I would like to add something to the debate on vulnerability, which divides nations over the subject of migrants. Vulnerable persons are at a disadvantage and cannot defend themselves. They have no resources and they are excluded. They are driven by violence, by natural situations or, worse still, by indifference, intolerance and even hatred. In this situation, the right thing to do is identify the causes in order to bring the necessary powers to bear. It is not acceptable to avoid commitment by hiding behind linguistic sophistry that denigrates diplomacy, reducing it to the “art of the possible”, a sterile exercise to justify selfishness and inactivity.

It is to be hoped that all this will be taken into account during development of the *Global compact for safe, regular and orderly migration*, which is currently being drawn up under the auspices of the United Nations.

4. We should pay heed to the cry of so many of our marginalized and excluded brothers and sisters: “I am hungry, I am a foreigner, I am naked, sick and confined in a refugee camp”. It is a call for justice, not a plea or an emergency call. Everyone must communicate broadly and sincerely at all levels in order to find the best solutions and develop a new relationship between the various stakeholders in the international scenario, characterized by mutual accountability, solidarity and communion.

The yoke of misery generated by the often disastrous displacement of migrants can be removed through proper preventive action in the form of development projects that create jobs and the ability to respond to environmental crises. Prevention undoubtedly costs much less than the effects of land degradation or water pollution: scourges afflicting sensitive



areas of the world where poverty is the only law, disease is on the increase and life expectancy is falling.

Many praiseworthy initiatives are being implemented. But this is not enough, we urgently need to carry on encouraging new actions and funding programmes to combat endemic hunger and misery with greater efficiency and more hope of success. While it may be laudable to strive for a diversified and productive form of farming that takes into account the actual needs of the country, it is not lawful to take good farmland from people, perpetrating the profitability of self-interested land grabbing, sometimes with the complicity of those who should defend the people's interests. We need to avoid the temptation to take action for small population groups as well as to use external aid inappropriately, thus fostering corruption or illegality.

The Catholic Church, through her institutions, has direct and specific knowledge of situations to be addressed and needs to be met and wishes to play a direct role in this effort by virtue of her mission, which leads her to love everyone and also compels her to remind those who hold national or international responsibilities of their overriding duty to meet the needs of the poorest people.

I call upon everyone to discover within themselves – in the stillness of their own faiths or convictions – the motivation, principles and support required to help FAO and other intergovernmental institutions to improve and work tirelessly for the good of the human family.

Thank you.