

Director-General of FAO,

Your Royal Highness

Excellencies,

Mayors,

It really is a pleasure for the Italian Government to be able to contribute to World Food Day. You wrote, "It is time for action". It is time to do something. It is time to work together for a battle of civilizations. Mr Director-General, our country is extremely proud to host FAO here in Rome. It is a matter of national pride, not merely of bureaucratic organization. It is not a question of hosting the offices. It is a question of hosting the ideals, of living them and holding them in all our hearts.

I would like to thank her Royal Highness for Morocco's work to organize COP22 in Marrakesh on 14 and 15 November. Italy will be represented, and we will be making all the necessary commitments. We are working toward ratifying the Paris Agreement in Parliament before the Marrakesh Summit or a few days after. We are sure that the Moroccan Summit will be a significant event. It would be a mistake to think we can rest on our laurels after the Paris Agreement, though it was right to highlight our achievement as worthwhile. I personally signed the Agreement in April at the request of Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in New York, after the encouraging outcome achieved in Paris in December last year. Yet Marrakesh tells us that we must do more. We must get going again.

Welcome to the Mayors, beginning with the Mayor of Rome, Virginia Raggi, and all the other Mayors who are meeting today and will have the opportunity to discuss aspects of the fight against hunger and poverty in this wonderful city. Mayors of extraordinary cities. Luanda, Cordoba. Turin, a major UN hub. Welcome to the Mayor of Zagreb, the Mayor of Valencia, to which my local community is linked by a long-standing twinning agreement. In Italy, we say that Mayors are "first citizens". But they are also the last citizens, because the buck stops with them. I hope my fellow Mayors (because having been a mayor I still feel I am one, even though I am not) will take the great international issues tabled here to your own cities and spread the word.

A special welcome to the representative of the Holy See. Pope Francis has reminded us, from this very place, of the extraordinary importance and prominence of this issue for our consciences as well as for our dignity as human beings. Before I start, allow me also to extend a special welcome to the ambassadors. I would like to welcome the ambassadors of the countries present at FAO, but also the ambassadors of FAO in the world, beginning with my friend Carlin Petrini, a tireless proponent of the message that this theme is Political with a capital P. I would like to dwell briefly on this point. This theme is Political. It is not a theme for insiders. It is not a theme for disaster experts. It is not a theme for developing countries. Italy believes that in this historical age, this "hairpin bend" in history that we are living through (this expression in Italian "tornante della storia" was used by a great Mayor, Mayor La Pira), the theme of combating hunger and poverty, the fight for food security and the fight for quality of life is a matter of Politics with a capital P.

This is why, Mr Director-General, next year our country will host three events of undoubted importance. In Rome, the 27 States wishing to build a European Union based on the future will meet on 25 March, to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of signing the Treaty of Rome. In May, the G7 will be held in Taormina. We have discussed this and agreed we should make every effort to ensure that the G7 will not merely be an opportunity to talk about geopolitical contingencies: it will be a broad-ranging event where we will be able to put the issues you will talk about today at the top of the agenda. Our aim as Italians is also to change the agenda of international summits to focus on these issues. 2017 will also be the year when Italy is represented on the Security Council. In November we will actually be chairing the Security Council. On this

subject, allow me to extend a grateful welcome to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for the work he has done over the years, particularly in emphasizing the Millennium Goals. I belong to a generation that entered political life because of the Millennium Goals set in 2000. A special welcome to our new Secretary-General-elect, António Guterres, a great friend of our country, a great politician and a great European personality who still has a soul. António was a great prime minister, he has been an extraordinary defender of refugees' rights in the great UN family and I am sure he will be an outstanding Secretary-General in the years to come.

Now I will quickly run through the reasons why this question is political. There is the issue of quality, of food quality. Yet the first quality is that of human relations. There has been an evident improvement in the fight against poverty and hunger, an improvement that has brought 1 billion people out of poverty in recent years: the progress is encouraging. We have to stop listening to those who say that everything is going down the pan because we are progressing in the right direction. We are going too slowly, but we are getting there. As we proceed on our way, though, we must address the issue of ensuring quality for all. A child with a smartphone living in any remote village in Africa or south-east Asia today now has the right to the same information as a child who lives in the suburbs of one of the world's great metropolises. It is unthinkable that a child who has the right to information and knowledge does not have the same right to food and to quality. It is a Political theme, with a capital P. When seen in this way, it is the job of the international community to throw a beam of light on this extraordinary and stark injustice, on this extraordinary and stark inequality. Of course it all boils down to culture in the end. The great hope for politics in the coming years lies in this cultural aspect: we must make people understand that going "back to the land" is not a negative expression, as it has been for 20 years of political debate, at least in Italy and in many Western countries in general. In Italy, people used to say "go back to the land", or "get lost, go back to your plough", as an insult, failing to realise that the land is the point where everything starts afresh.

On Tuesday, Italy will be the guest of President Obama and his wife, the First Lady, at the White House in the United States of America. President Obama has chosen to dedicate his last State visit to Italy. It is a mark of the friendship between our countries that, in the words of President Obama, "has never been stronger". One of the new things that we will find at the White House is a vegetable garden, as Mr Carlin is well aware. This is a tangible thing as well as a symbolic message: even in the seat of the greatest power in the world, we need to go back to the land and the values that stem from it; not merely the products it produces. For the Italian government, for any government and for the Italian government in particular, this must manifest itself in different tangible ways; my aim is not to talk theory. Now I would like to address the representatives of the Carabinieri. When we talk about quality, we are talking about the need to consider the issue of agrifood security in our countries. Much work has already been done but we need to do more. Speaking now to my fellow citizens, as part of its spending review, Italy made one police force part of another, because from 1 January 2017 the Forest Guard will become part of the Carabinieri. This organizational streamlining (there is unfortunately often too much redundancy in Italy) is an expression of our desire to invest more to make our agrifood policing the strongest in the world.

Our government is working on a second point that we must also do more work on with you, our friends in FAO: the fight against food waste. We passed a law against food waste, unanimously I believe. I am now looking for confirmation to Minister Martina over there, who championed the bill with Deputy Gadda. It is a big step forward for Italy. It was inspired by the French model, but our law is different. We focus a lot more on cooperation than punishment. And we have a quantifiable goal. Nowadays we recover 500,000 tons of food a year. From 2017, we hope to recover one million tons of food a year. I come from a rural background, and I am very proud of it. Sometimes politicians fall over themselves to trace back their noble roots. My noble roots are my grandfather, who was a broker in the area of Valdarno Fiorentino near the city of Florence. My experience was moulded by that rural background. I remember Saturday lunches when we all sat together around the table with the spitting roast in the background; the grandchildren competing to see who could climb highest up the cherry tree. Food is about community. It is not only about eating, it is about

sharing. I do not want to use it in its political sense, but the word “companion” comes from the Latin expression for sharing bread; sharing a staple: *cum panis*. This is something that the FAO logo also reminds us of.

The message we can take from that culture is rejection of a culture of waste. Being in favour of a law against food waste in Italy, in Europe and throughout the world means, Mr Director-General, that here today – in a world where we all risk being reduced to numbers and losing the very idea of citizenship – we will make the idea that we cannot accept a culture of waste one of the issues on the international stage for 2017. This is the contribution that Italy will make in November 2017 to building a Europe with a soul; to building a G7 anchored to values and not merely geopolitical contingencies viewed from an ivory tower.

These are our values. I would like to say here and now that being against a culture of waste means being against a culture that would like to treat those who arrived here last as so much waste: let me say this on behalf of the Italian government. I will say it here, in the FAO headquarters: Europe needs to change its approach to everything to do with the struggle against the waste culture. Apart from this crusade, we also need to conduct a crusade on immigration issues. We are in good company, but there are far too few of us. At present, we are seeing the resurgence of new forms of national selfishness. Europe was created to break down walls, not to build new ones. A lot of the attitudes behind the waste culture are concerned with not wanting to face up to problems, the people, the women and men who risk dying of drowning every day. For this reason too, Mr Director-General, I am not straying off the topic when I say that I will propose placing the boat (which we set out to salvage from a depth of several meters so that we could give a decent burial to those who died in the Mediterranean in April 2015) in front of the headquarters of the European institutions. We Europeans have spent a lot of money to build a very fine new headquarters, but I would like to put the wrecked boat in front of it to remind us what we need to be and how we must fight a culture that is selfish and places interests above ideals.

I would like to mention a third thing quickly and then I will conclude. Any government that wants to take action on these topics must have the strength to put their words into action. Otherwise it is just talk. When we were getting ready for last year's Expo, which was extraordinarily effective (on this subject, Mr Carlin over there was one of the people who voiced most concerns about our approach to the issues of Expo before, during and after the event), the most useful thing that came out of it was that Expo made this issue central to the international agenda. Of course there were some reservations. One of the things we were taught at the Expo, by a great man called Ermanno Olmi (who is a great man of culture, and we need teachers and men of culture at this stage of our history) is that the dignity of those who produce comes before any form of marketing. Minister Martina came back from that meeting and, once we had discussed it, we jointly decided to reduce the tax burden on the rural workers and farmers of Italy. Because if you believe in values, you should act on your beliefs and not merely talk about them to create a good impression. You must be consistent. This is the reason why in Italy in 2016, we did away with the Regional Tax on Productive Activities (IRAP) and property ownership tax (IMU) for farmers and also why in 2017 we will do away with the income tax (IRPEF) for farmers, continuing our series of reductions in the tax burden on the farming world that is so crucial. Because if you can keep people working on the land, you are handing down tradition, ensuring quality and guaranteeing a product while also defending against abandonment and against hydrogeological imbalance and ensuring a presence that harks back to the values of the rural world I was talking about.

We have spoken about the fight against waste, which is primarily cultural, the battle for quality, the investment in taxes. I would not be completely honest, Mr Director, if I did not mention very briefly a further issue that is bound to concern Italy and that is the Rome UN hub. Italy is one of the countries most committed to the United Nations. We support the Blue Berets and are also one of the countries with most UN headquarters, particularly in Rome and Turin but also in other sites where we work with the United Nations.

Speaking on behalf of the institutions, to those who work in this place and serve the United Nations and FAO, we do not treat your presence simply as an organizational settlement. Over the coming months and years we would like to forge stronger links between Italy's ideals and the cities hosting UN centres and particularly the Rome hub, and we will strive to achieve this. Think about it for a moment: we live in an age when the United Nations is more important than ever. Some of us have grown up with legendary figures. I, for example, have always had a special place in my heart for a great personality from the world of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld. I believe that Dag Hammarskjöld was one of the greatest UN Secretary-Generals. In his diary, which was incidentally published by the Bose Community, he wrote some extraordinary passages about the relationship between political ideals and practical politics. It should be part of any curriculum. The title of Dag Hammarskjöld's diary is "Markings" and its theme is that the UN has a wealth of ideals that are sometimes put under strain by current events but that it is essential to foster. Today, in this place, my message to you is that we need to establish a different model of ideals and values for our time. When we Italians state in our Stability Law that for every euro invested in security (police forces, territorial army and public protection) we need to invest a euro in culture, education, kindergartens and people who work the land or who work in fundamental human values, we are saying that we want a different development model. We are trying to say the same as Ermanno Olmi. We are trying to establish the principle that our age should not merely be an age of tax codes but an age where codes of ideals are worth more than tax codes. Codes of ideals and values are the factors that make us proud of FAO's presence here in Rome. We must live up to your presence here. You too, friends of FAO, have your work cut out because while admittedly there have always been problems, difficulties and scandals in Italian cities (nothing has changed since Renaissance times) this flourishing of different experiences gave us Culture with a capital C – and this makes us qualified to tell you that the values we believe in are values that make the matter of food and farming not something that concerns you alone, but a political matter. I promise you that Italy will use 2017 as an extraordinary international opportunity – through the Rome Summit, the Taormina Summit and our UN Presidency in November 2017 – to put this subject on the agenda and act as your sounding board. We are worthy of the great heritage of Italy and of this Organization.

Long live Italy, long live FAO.