



The Holy See

***MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
SIGNED BY CARDINAL ANGELO SODANO
ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD FOOD DAY 1997****

Mr Director-General, The World Food Summit, at which FAO member States and the entire United Nations family solemnly committed themselves to a more vigorous fight against hunger and malnutrition, remains a vivid memory in the international community and in public awareness throughout the world. This year's celebration of World Food Day is a welcome occasion for His Holiness Pope John Paul II to reaffirm his appreciation of that initiative and to renew his support for the work undertaken by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations under your excellent direction. The goal of securing concrete results within the first years of the new millennium appears increasingly linked, not only to decisions of a political and technical nature, but to a direct change of attitudes, life-style, and personal, community and governmental action on the various levels. Despite the inevitable difficulties which may be encountered along the way, united and determined action is the only efficacious response to the cry of those who live personally the tragedy of hunger. Knowing the causes, defining modes of behaviour, implementing policies and providing assistance may appear sufficient but are in fact inadequate without constant reference to people and their actual needs. The experience of international efforts and of FAO in particular demonstrates that the mere availability of food is not sufficient to banish hunger. Correct political, economic and environmental conditions are necessary to provide a constant and adequate level of food security. Translated into the ethics of international relations, this means focusing attention on the individual and collective commitment to devising practical ways of implementing a real sharing of resources, so that everyone will feel responsible for his "neighbour" —whether person, community, nation or State. Awareness that "giving" is superior to "having" provides a firm foundation both for relations among peoples and for international solidarity. To allow the life-expectancy of millions of human beings and entire communities to be compromised or even denied due to lack of daily sustenance is a glaring negation of humanity's common conscience and constitutes a violation of fundamental rights, beginning with people's social and economic rights. This situation cannot leave us indifferent. The fact is that certain forms of international assistance, being increasingly tied to a limited vision of globalization, risk ignoring the reality of the men and women, in the countryside or in the city, who remain excluded from the world economy, from organized intervention or assistance, and even from the benefits deriving from their own work. The theme of the current World Food Day, "Investing in Food Security", offers a fresh starting-point for practical international action capable of involving different kinds of contributions, so long as they are free of preconditions or selfish interests. These are the reflections which the Holy Father wishes to offer to all those throughout the world who celebrate World Food Day, as well

as to those who in any way are involved in the alleviation of hunger and malnutrition. His hope is that every individual person will search his heart and find therein those profound human motives which alone can inspire a renewed "spirit of sharing". Invoking the blessings of almighty God upon the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, His Holiness renews to you, Mr Director-General, the expression of his esteem and highest consideration. **Cardinal Angelo Sodano**

Secretary of State

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