The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
FOR WORLD FOOD DAY 2020

[FAO, 16 October 2020]

[Multimedia]

To His Excellency
Mr Qu Dongyu
Director General of FAO

On the day in which fao celebrates the 75th anniversary of its creation, I wish to greet you and all the members that are a part of it. Its mission is beautiful and important because you work with the objective of defeating hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition.

The theme chosen for this year's World Food Day is significant: "Grow, Nourish, Sustain", and to do so, "Together. Our actions are our future". This theme underscores the need to act jointly and with firm determination in order to create initiatives that improve the environment around us and promote hope in many persons and peoples.

Throughout these 75 years fao has learned that it is not enough to produce food, but that it is also important to guarantee that food systems be sustainable and offer healthy diets accessible to all. It is a matter of adopting innovative solutions that can transform the way we produce and consume food for the wellbeing of our communities and of our planet, thus strengthening the capacity to recover and long term sustainability.

Therefore, at this time of great difficulty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is even more important to sustain initiatives put into action by organizations like fao, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (Ifad) in order to promote

sustainable and diversified agriculture, support small agricultural communities and cooperate in the rural development of the poorest countries.

We are conscious that there is a need to respond to this challenge in an epoch that is full of contradictions: on the one hand we are witnesses of unprecedented progress in various scientific fields; on the other hand the world is facing several humanitarian crises. Unfortunately we see that according to fao's most recent statistics, despite the efforts undertaken in the last decades, the number of people fighting against hunger and food insecurity is growing, and the current pandemic will even further worsen these numbers.

Hunger is not only a tragedy for humanity, but also a shame. It is caused largely by an unequal distribution of the fruits of the earth, compounded by a lack of investment in the agricultural sector, the consequences of climate change and the increase in conflicts in various areas of the planet. On the other hand, tons of food are thrown away. Faced with this reality, we cannot remain insensitive or paralyzed. We are all responsible. The current crisis shows us that policies and concrete action are needed to eradicate world hunger. At times, dialectical or ideological discussions distance us from achieving this objective, and we allow our brothers and sisters to continue dying due to lack of food. A courageous decision would be to establish a "Global Fund" with the money that is used for weapons and other military expenditures, in order to definitively eliminate hunger and contribute to the development of poorer countries. In this way, many wars and the migration of many of our brothers and sisters and their families, forced to abandon their homes and countries to seek a more dignified life, would be avoided (*Fratelli Tutti*, cf. n. 189 and 262).

Mr Director General, in expressing my wish that fao activities may be ever more incisive and fruitful, I invoke God's Blessing on you and on those who cooperate in this fundamental mission of cultivating the earth, feeding the hungry and safeguarding natural resources so that we all may live with dignity, with respect and with love.

Thank you.

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