



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS
TO ORGANISERS AND PARTICIPANTS IN THE 7TH MEETING
OF THE FORUM OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

*To Her Excellency
Ms. Myrna Cunningham
Chair of the Steering Committee
of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum of IFAD*

Your Excellency,

I wish to greet all those attending this meeting, and I hope that it will be a meaningful space for debate, study and reflection on the priorities, concerns and just aspirations of indigenous communities.

The chosen theme, "Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination: a pathway for food security and sovereignty", calls us to recognize the value of indigenous peoples, as well as the ancestral heritage of knowledge and practices that positively enrich the great human family, colouring it with the varied features of their traditions. All of this reveals a horizon of hope in the present time, marked by intense and complex challenges and not a few tensions.

The defence of the right to preserve one's own culture and identity necessarily involves recognising the value of their contribution to society and safeguarding their existence and the natural resources they need to live. This is seriously threatened by the increasing grabbing of farmland by multinational companies, large investors and states. These are damaging practices that threaten the right to a dignified life of communities.

Land, water and food are not mere commodities, but the very basis of life and the link between these peoples and nature. Defending these rights is therefore not only a matter of justice, but a guarantee of a sustainable future for everyone. Inspired by a sense of belonging to the human

family, we can ensure that future generations will enjoy a world in keeping with the beauty and goodness that guided God's hands in creating it.

I implore Almighty God that these efforts may be fruitful and serve as an inspiration to the leaders of nations, so that appropriate steps may be taken to ensure that the human family will walk together in the pursuit of the common good, so that no one will be excluded and no one will be left behind.

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