



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON FISHERIES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT*

Saturday, 30 June 1984 Mr President, Mr Director-General,

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very pleased to speak today to those taking part in the World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development, called by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. As you are aware, our meeting is being held at the time of the religious celebrations marking the origin of the community of Christ's disciples, which was founded upon Peter, a simple fisherman who was called to preside over and direct a worldwide spiritual and moral mission. Thus the Catholic Church from the very beginning was in close contact with the world of fishermen. We may think that what particularly attracted Christ to fishermen and caused him to choose them for a very different kind of work was their courage, their spirit of initiative, and their readiness to face the risks of wind and wave. The Church is well aware of the difficulties and problems of the lives of those connected with the fishing industry, problems that are shared today by those throughout the world who earn their living from the sea. It is natural that the main concern of the present Conference is the rapidly increasing need for food resources to satisfy the hunger of millions of people suffering malnutrition in the poorest countries of the world. It is common knowledge that there has been a profound modification of thinking regarding economic and social development in general. Indeed, one notes a comforting return to the primacy of agriculture and the efficient use of agricultural products, following a period of excessive attention to the industrial sector. In this regard it is useful to recall that the Statutes of FAO place under the heading of agriculture the products not only of the earth and the forests but also of the waters. It is particularly opportune that emphasis today is being placed on the fisheries sector among the food products demanded by the growing population of the world. This is especially important for responding to the pressing needs of those countries where there is an acute imbalance between demand and actual food resources. In fact fish resources can still be better and more widely used. Fishing thus has enormous importance in the struggle to alleviate undernutrition. Particularly in the smaller centres it is a prime resource for immediate food requirements. Your Conference rightly pays particular attention to small-scale fishing, and you insist that the problems connected with it have real priority. Small-scale fishing communities and their needs are to be taken into consideration and integrated into national economies. Similarly, the development of the various forms of aqua culture is obviously very opportune. The good results already gained show that this activity not only helps to increase food resources but also creates new employment opportunities, especially in the developing countries. It is also a powerful instrument for protecting and restoring the environment.³ You rightly consider fishing as a whole series of human activities, and you rightly emphasize the social objectives connected with it. In order to meet the needs of today's society, it is necessary to apply to the fisheries sector forms required by modern and efficient management. Clearly, your

Conference has to proceed on the level of the practical solutions made possible by modern technology. Hence the need to take into consideration the actual economic conditions of each individual country, so as to be able to outline realistic targets and specify the financing needed. But what you keep constantly in mind and what you use as a constant point of reference are the basic human aspects, especially those experienced by the people whose livelihood is fishing and its connected industry. It is therefore the task of your Conference to re-examine the criteria already laid down with regard to agriculture in order to ensure not only technical and economic development but also the human development of individuals and communities. Countries are obviously dependent on one another, and it is this fact that makes it necessary to coordinate internal policies with a view to worldwide development. This is why in my Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* I stressed the principle of the priority of human work in the whole economic process (cf. Ioannis Pauli PP. II, *Laborem Exercens*, 4. 25). Consequently, the public authorities should favour forms of co-responsibility of those working in small-scale and large-scale fisheries, and the different forms of their solidarity in free associations. The active participation of all fishery workers in the decision-making that affects their lives and work should be encouraged.⁴ One of your important tasks is to encourage appropriate use of available resource and to develop new ones. Here too I would like to urge scientists to use all their talents and expertise. There must also be agreement on the criteria and methods to be applied to fishing in the context of world development. A greater availability of financial resources and an improvement in loan and credit facilities are an obvious prerequisite for efficiency of production, and there must also be adequate provision for the replacement of equipment. Steps should be taken to facilitate access for fish products to the market, also for small-scale communities, with encouragement for improved treatment and presentation of these products by the fishing communities. It is therefore to be hoped that this Conference will be able to reach an agreement on the major aspects of the management and development of fishing. It is also to be hoped that all States and volunteer organizations with all their resources and energies will work effectively together in order to achieve efficient joint action. It is to be hoped that your work will confirm the increase in forms of solidarity and mutual aid, not only between the highly industrialized and the developing countries, but also between the countries with limited resources.⁵ The Church once more repeats that she is ready to assist, in the forms proper to her, all efforts to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in the world, and efforts to raise the living standards of those who are really poor and unable to work for their own economic and social development. In particular, it seems opportune to emphasize the Church's readiness to encourage her institutions to collaborate in any appropriate field. In particular, the Church is prepared to intensify her own educational work, at both elementary and professional levels, and thus to contribute to the training which is essential for coping with changes in production and selling methods. It is with this solicitude for all those working for economic and social development in the fisheries sphere, and likewise for the betterment of those engaged in fishery activities throughout the world, that I express my admiration for your important efforts. Upon all of you I invoke God's blessings in your present and future work for the good of

humanity.

* *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. VII, 2 p. 1993-1998. *L'Osservatore Romano* 30.6.1984 p.1, 5. *L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n.32 p.5. *Paths to Peace* p. 286-288. © Copyright 1984 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana