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The Pope greets representatives of Indigenous Peoples participating in the Third Forum held by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

The following is Pope Francis' greeting, before this morning's general audience, to the participants in the Third Global Meeting of the Indigenous Peoples' Forum held by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), which celebrates the fortieth anniversary of its foundation this year.

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to welcome you at the conclusion of the third Indigenous Peoples' Forum convened by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, which this year is celebrating the fortieth anniversary of its foundation.

You have come together to identify ways of giving greater economic empowerment to indigenous peoples. I believe that the central issue is how to reconcile the right to development, both social and cultural, with the protection of the particular characteristics of indigenous peoples and their territories.

This is especially clear when planning economic activities which may interfere with indigenous cultures and their ancestral relationship to the earth. In this regard, the right to prior and informed consent should always prevail, as foreseen in Article 32 of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Only then is it possible to guarantee peaceful cooperation between governing authorities and indigenous peoples, overcoming confrontation and conflict.

A second aspect concerns the development of guidelines and projects which take into account indigenous identity, with particular attention to young people and women; not only considering them, but including them. For governments this means recognising that indigenous communities are a part of the population to be appreciated and consulted, and whose full participation should be promoted at the local and national level.

IFAD can contribute effectively to this needed road map through its funding and expertise, keeping in mind that "a technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress" (Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 194).

And you, in your traditions, in your culture – because what you bring to history is culture – live progress with a special care for the mother earth. In this moment, in which humanity is committing a grave sin in not caring for the earth, I urge you to continue to bear witness to this; and do not allow new technologies – which are legitimate and good – but do not allow those which destroy the earth, which destroy the environment and the ecological balance, and which end up destroying the wisdom of peoples.

I offer you heartfelt thanks for your presence, and I ask the Almighty to bless your communities and to enlighten the work of all those responsible for governing IFAD.
