The Holy See

WORLD FOOD DAY

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

Monday, 16 October 2017

[Multimedia]

Mr Director-General,
Distinguished Authorities,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to thank the Director-General, Professor José Graziano da Silva, for the invitation and for his words of welcome, and I warmly greet the Representatives of the Member States and those who have the opportunity to join us from fao offices around the world.

I address a special greeting to the g7 Agriculture Ministers present here, following their summit in which they discussed issues that demand responsibility not only in relation to development and production, but also with respect to the International Community as a whole.

1. The celebration of this World Food Day brings us together here to commemorate that 16 October in 1945, when Governments instituted the fao with the intention of eliminating world hunger through the development of the agricultural sector. It was a period of grave food insecurity and major population displacements, with millions of people seeking a place to survive the extreme poverty and adversity caused by the war.

Therefore, reflecting on the effects of food security on human mobility means returning to the commitment that gave rise to the fao, in order to renew it. The current situation demands greater responsibility on all levels, not only in order to guarantee the necessary production or equitable distribution of the fruits of the earth — this duty should be taken as a given — but above all to guarantee to all human beings the right to be nourished according to their own needs, and also participate in decisions that affect them and in the achievement of their own aspirations, without having to part from their loved ones.

Faced with such a significant objective, the credibility of the entire international system is at stake. We know that cooperation is increasingly conditioned by partial commitments, which now actually limit even emergency aid. Yet death by starvation or the abandonment of one's own land is everyday news, which risks being met with indifference. It is therefore urgent to find new avenues, to transform the possibilities available to us into a guarantee that allows each person to look to the future with well-founded trust and not just with some wish.

The landscape of international relations shows a growing capacity for responding to the expectations of the human family, also with the contribution of science and technology which, by studying the problems, propose appropriate solutions. Yet even these new developments do not succeed in eliminating the exclusion of much of the world's population: how many victims of malnutrition, wars, climate change are there? How many people lack work and essential items, and are forced to leave their land, exposing themselves to many and terrible forms of exploitation? Enhancing technology at the service of development is certainly one path to take, provided it leads to concrete actions to reduce the number of those going hungry or to govern the phenomenon of forced migration.

2. The relationship between hunger and migration can only be tackled if we go to the root of the problem. In this regard, studies conducted by the United Nations, as well as by many other civil society organizations, agree that there are two main obstacles to be overcome: conflicts and climate change.

How can *conflicts* be overcome? International law gives us the means to prevent them or to resolve them quickly, keeping them from dragging on, creating famine and destroying the social fabric. Let us consider the people afflicted by wars that have lasted for decades, which could have been prevented or at least stopped, and which instead propagate their disastrous effects, including food insecurity and the forced displacement of people. Good will and dialogue are needed to curb conflicts, and it is necessary to make a firm commitment to gradual and systematic disarmament, as provided for by the *Charter of the United Nations*, and to remedy the scourge of arms trafficking. What good is it to denounce the fact that millions of people are victims of hunger and malnutrition as a result of conflicts, if we do not work effectively for peace and disarmament?

As for *climate change*, we see the consequences every day. Thanks to scientific knowledge, we know how the problems are to be faced; and the international community has drawn up the necessary legal instruments, such as the Paris Agreement, from which, however, some are withdrawing. There is a re-emergence of nonchalance towards the delicate balances of ecosystems, the presumption of being able to manipulate and control the planet's limited resources, the greed for profit. It is therefore necessary to make an effort for a concrete and active consensus if we wish to avoid more tragic effects, which will continue to impact upon the poorest and the most helpless. We are called to propose a change in lifestyles, in the use of resources, in production criteria, including consumption which, with regard to food, sees increasing losses and

waste. We cannot resign ourselves to saying: “someone else will take care of it”.

I think that these are the preconditions for any serious discussion of food security linked to the phenomenon of migration. It is clear that war and climate change are causes of hunger, so let us refrain from presenting it as an incurable disease. Recent estimates provided by your experts foresee an increase in global grain production to levels that allow for greater consistency to be given to global reserves. This gives hope, and it demonstrates that if we work by being attentive to needs and opposing speculation, there will be results. Indeed, food resources are not infrequently left to the mercy of speculation, which measures them solely with regard to the economic prosperity of big producers or in relation to the potential for consumption, and not the real needs of the people. This favours conflicts and waste, and increases the numbers of the poorest on earth who seek a future outside their countries of origin.

3. In view of all this, we can and must change direction (cf. Encyclical *Laudato Si’*, 53; 61; 163; 202). Faced with the increased demand for food, it is indispensable that the fruits of the land be available to all. For some it would be enough to reduce the number of mouths to feed and in this way solve the problem; but it is a false solution if we consider the levels of food waste and models of consumption that squander many resources. Reducing is easy; sharing instead demands conversion, and this is demanding.

Therefore I ask myself — and I ask you — this question: is it too much to consider introducing into the language of international cooperation the category of love, understood as gratuitousness, equal treatment, solidarity, the culture of giving, fraternity, mercy? Indeed these words express the practical content of the term “humanitarian”, widely used in international activities. To love one’s brothers and sisters, and to do so first, without waiting for it to be reciprocated: this is a Gospel principle that is found in many cultures and religions, and it becomes the *principle of humanity* in the language of international relations. It is to be hoped that diplomacy and multilateral Institutions nurture and organize this capacity to love, because it is the royal road that guarantees not only food security, but human security in a global sense. We cannot work only if others do so, nor can we limit ourselves to taking pity, because pity stops at emergency aid, whereas love inspires justice and is essential to achieving a just social order among diverse realities that decide to run the risk of mutual encounter. To love means to contribute so that every country increases its production and reaches food self-sufficiency. To love translates into thinking of new development and consumption models, and adopting policies that do not aggravate the situation of less advanced populations, or their external dependency. To love means not continuing to divide the human family into those who have more than they need, and those who lack the essentials.

Diplomatic efforts have shown us, also in recent events, that it is possible to stop the recourse to the use of weapons of mass destruction. We are all aware of these instruments’ capacity for destruction. But are we equally aware of the effects of poverty and exclusion? How can we stop people willing to risk everything, entire generations that may disappear because they lack their

daily bread, or are victims of violence or climate change? They head toward where they see a light or perceive the hope of life. They cannot be stopped by physical, economic, legislative or ideological barriers: only a consistent application of the *principle of humanity* can do so. On the other hand, public development assistance is reduced and the activity of multilateral Institutions is limited, while bilateral agreements are sought which subordinate cooperation to the fulfillment of particular agendas and alliances or, simply, to temporary tranquillity. On the contrary, the management of human mobility requires a coordinated, systematic intergovernmental action in accordance with existing international norms, and full of love and intelligence. Its objective is a meeting of peoples that enriches all and generates union and dialogue, not exclusion or vulnerability.

Here, allow me to join the debate on vulnerability, which causes division at the international level when it comes to migrants. A vulnerable person is one who is in an inferior situation and cannot defend himself, who has no means, and thus experiences exclusion. This is because he is compelled by violence, by natural situations or, even worse, by indifference, intolerance and even hatred. In this condition, it is right to identify the causes so as to act with the necessary competence. But it is not acceptable that, in order to avoid commitment, one entrenches oneself behind linguistic sophisms that do not honour diplomacy but, rather, reduce it from the “art of the possible” to a sterile exercise to justify selfishness and inactivity.

It is hoped that all this will be taken into account in the development of the *Global Compact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration*, currently underway in the United Nations.

4. Let us listen to the cry of so many of our marginalized and excluded brothers and sisters: “I am hungry, I am a stranger, I am naked, sick, locked up in a refugee camp”. It is a call for justice, not a plea or an emergency appeal. There is a need for broad and sincere dialogue at all levels, so that the best solutions can emerge and a new relationship among the various actors on the international scene can mature, characterized by mutual responsibility, solidarity and communion.

The yoke of extreme poverty generated by the often tragic displacement of migrants can be eliminated through prevention in the form of development projects that create work and the capacity to respond to environmental crises. Prevention costs far less than the effects of land degradation or water pollution, scourges that plague the nerve centres of the planet, where poverty is the only law, diseases are on the rise and life expectancy is decreasing.

The initiatives being implemented are many and praiseworthy. However, they are not enough: it is urgent to continue to initiate efforts and to finance programmes to confront hunger and structural poverty in a more effective and promising way. But if the aim is to promote agriculture that produces according to a country’s actual needs, then it is not legitimate to take arable land away from the population, enabling land grabbing (*acaparamiento de tierras*) to continue to be profitable, sometimes with the complicity of those who are called to act in the interests of the people. It is

important to remove the temptation to work to the advantage of small groups of the population, as well as to use external aid inappropriately, fostering corruption, or in a manner outside the law.

The Catholic Church, with her Institutions, and having direct and concrete knowledge of the situations to be faced and of the needs to be met, wishes to participate directly in this effort by virtue of her mission, which leads her to love everyone and also compels her to remind those who bear national or international responsibility of the overriding duty to share the needs of the many.

It is hoped that each person may discover, in the silence of his or her own faith or convictions, the motivations, principles and contributions to give to the fao and to other intergovernmental Institutions the courage to improve and persevere for the good of the human family.

Thank you.

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