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Visit of the Holy Father Francis to the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in Rome for World Food Day

This morning, the Holy Father Francis visited the headquarters of the FAO in Rome for the celebration of World Food Day, this year on the theme: *Change the future of migration. Invest in food security and rural development.*

Upon arrival, at 8.50, the Pope was welcomed by the Director General of the FAO, Dr. José Graziano da Silva, and the Holy See Permanent Observer at the United Nations Organisations and Organs for Food and Agriculture (FAO, IFAD, WFP), the Rev. Msgr. Fernando Chica Arellano.

In the entrance hall, the sculpture donated by the Holy Father to the FAO was unveiled.

The Pope then attended a brief meeting, in the China Hall, with the Director General, the adjunct Director General Daniel Gustafson, and the Head of the Cabinet, Mario Lubetkin. The signing of the Book of Honour took place at the end.

The Pope proceeded to the second floor of the building, where in the Caribbean Hall he greeted the President of Madagascar, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, the Minister of Agriculture of Madagascar, the Minister of Agriculture of Italy, Minister of Agriculture of Canada, Minister of Agriculture of France, Minister of Agriculture of the United States of America, the Under-Secretary for the Environment of Great Britain, the Secretary for Agriculture of Germany, the European Commissioner for Agriculture, the Commissioner for Agriculture of the African Union, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, the Ambassador of Japan to the FAO, the President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Executive Director of the World Food Program.

At 9.15, in the Plenary Hall, after the opening of the Meeting by Mr. Enrique Yeves, the screening of a video on the theme of World Food Day and the introductory words by the Director General, Dr. José Graziano da Silva, the Pope gave his address. At the end, the Moderator declared the suspension of the meeting and the Holy Father Francis left the room. He then took leave of the FAO headquarters and at 10.15, returned to the Vatican.

The following is the Holy Father Francis' address during the opening of the meeting in the Plenary Hall:

Address of the Holy Father

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 greet with affection the authorities who accompany us, as well as the Representatives of the Member States and those who have the possibility of following along from the offices of the FAO around the world.

I address a special greeting to the Ministers of Agriculture of the G7 present here, following their summit in which they discussed issues which 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 unites us in memory of that 16 October of the year 1945, when governments, with the intention of eliminating hunger in the world through development of the agricultural sector, instituted the FAO. It was a period of grave food insecurity and major displacements of the population, with millions of people seeking a place to survive the miseries and adversity caused by the war.

In the light of this, 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 to guarantee the necessary production or equitable distribution of the fruits of the earth – this duty is taken for granted – but above all to guarantee the right of all human beings to be nourished according to their own needs, also participating in decisions that effect them and in the realisation of their own aspirations, without having to part from their loved ones.

Faced with an aim of such significance, the credibility of the entire international system is at stake. We know that cooperation is increasingly conditioned by partial commitments, which still now limit aid in emergencies. Even death by hunger or the abandonment of one's own land is daily news, which risks being met with indifference. It is therefore urgent to find new paths, to transform the possibilities available to us into a guarantee that permits each person to look to the future with well-founded trust and not only with desire.

The scenario of international relations shows a growing capacity for giving answers to the expectations of the human family, also with the contribution of science and technology which, 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 are the victims of malnutrition, wars, climate change? How many people lack work and essential items, and are forced to leave their land, exposing themselves to many and terrible forms of exploitation? Valorising technology in the service of development is certainly a path to take, provided it leads to concrete actions to reduce the number of those who suffer from hunger 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 problem. In this regard, studies conducted by the United Nations, as well as many other civil society organisations, agree that there are two main obstacles to overcome: conflicts and climate change.

How can conflicts be overcome? International law gives us the means to prevent them or to resolve them quickly, avoiding their prolongation and the production of famines and destruction of the social fabric. Let us think of the people afflicted by wars that have lasted for decades, which could have been avoided 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 United Nations Charter, and to remedy the scourge of arms trafficking. Of what value 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 the nonchalance towards the delicate balances of ecosystems, the presumption of being able to manipulate and control the planet's limited resources, and 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 most helpless. We are called to propose a change in lifestyles, in the use of resources, in production criteria, including consumption that, with regard to food, involves growing 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. Certainly wars and climate change cause hunger, so let us therefore avoid presenting it as if it were an incurable disease. The recent estimates provided by your experts foresee an increase in global production of cereals to levels that enable greater consistency to be given to global reserves. This gives hope, and demonstrates that if we work paying attention to needs and countering speculation, results will not be lacking. Indeed, food resources are not infrequently left at the mercy of speculation, which measures them solely with regard to the economic prosperity of the big producers or in relation to the potential for consumption and not the real needs of the people. This leads to 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 think of the levels of food waste and models of consumption that squander many resources. Reducing is easy; sharing instead demands conversion, and this is imperative.

Therefore I pose – and I pose to you – this question: is it too much to think of introducing into the language of international cooperation the category of love, understood as gratuitousness, parity in negotiation, solidarity, the culture of giving, fraternity, mercy? In effect, these words express the practical content of the term "humanitarian", widely used at international level. To love one's brothers and to do so first, without waiting for it to be reciprocated; this is a Gospel principal that is found in many cultures and religions, and becomes the *principle of humanity* in the language of international relations. It is to be hoped that diplomacy and multilateral Institutions nurture and organise this capacity to love, so that it may become the primary way to guarantee 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 having pity, because pity stops at emergency aid, whereas love inspires justice and is essential for realising a just social order among diverse realities that wish to run the risk of the 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 models of development and consumption, and adopting policies that do not aggravate the situation of the less advanced populations, or their external dependency. To love means not continuing to divide the human family into those who more than they need, and those who lack the essential.

The efforts of diplomacy 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 the capacity of destruction of these instruments. 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 changes? They head 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, we see that public development aid is reduced and the activity of the multilateral institutions is limited, while bilateral agreements are used which subordinate cooperation to the fulfilment of particular agendas and alliances or, simply, to a momentary tranquillity. On the contrary, the management of human mobility requires coordinated and systematic intergovernmental action in accordance with existing international

norms, and permeated with 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 join the debate on vulnerability, which causes division at the international level when it comes to immigrants. A vulnerable person is one who is in an inferior situation and cannot defend himself, who has no means, or rather, 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 to be hoped that all this will be taken into account in the development of the *Global Pact on Safe, Regular and Orderly Migration*, currently underway in the United Nations.

4. Let us listen to the cry of so many of our marginalised and excluded brothers: “I am hungry, I am a stranger, I am naked, sick, confined in a refugee camp”. It is a request for justice, not a plea or an emergency call. There is a need for broad and sincere dialogue at all levels, so that the best solutions can be found and a new relationship be nurtured between the various actors on the international scene, characterised by mutual responsibility, solidarity and communion.

The yoke of misery 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 increase and life expectancy is decreasing.

The initiatives that are being implemented are many, and praiseworthy. However, they are not enough: it is urgent to continue to promote new efforts and to finance programs to combat hunger and structural poverty in a more effective and promising way. But while the aim is to promote a diversified and productive agriculture, taking into account the real demands of a country, it is not however lawful to remove arable land from the population, enabling land grabbing (*acaparamiento de tierras*) to continue to be profitable, sometimes with the complicity of those who should defend the interests of the people. The temptation to work to the advantage of small groups of the population, as well as to use external aid inappropriately, favouring corruption, or in an illegal way, must be removed.

The Catholic Church, with her institutions, and having a direct and concrete knowledge of the situations to be faced or 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 meet the needs of the poorest.

I hope that each person may discover, in the silence of his or her own faith or convictions, the motivations, principles and contributions to give the FAO and other intergovernmental institutions the courage to improve and work tirelessly for the good of the human family.

Thank you.
