SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO
HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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Meeting of the Holy Father Francis with the Participants in the 42nd Session of the Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Agency of the United Nations in Rome

Address of the Holy Father to the Governing Council of the IFAD

Greeting of the Holy Father to a group of representatives of indigenous peoples

Greeting of the Holy Father to the staff of the IFAD

At 8.50 this morning, the Holy Father Francis travelled to the headquarters of the FAO in Rome for the meeting with the participants in the opening ceremony of the 42nd Session of the Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

Upon arrival, the Pope was received by the president of the IFAD, Gilbert F. Houngbo. Then, after signing the Book of Honour and the exchange of gifts, he proceeded to the Hall where the opening ceremony took place.

During the visit, after addressing the Governing Council during the opening session, the Pope greeted a group of representatives of indigenous peoples and greeted IFAD staff. At 10.50 the Holy Father left the premises of the FAO in Rome and returned to the Vatican.

The following is the Holy Father's address during the Governing Council of IFAD:

Address of the Holy Father to the Governing Council of the IFAD

Mr. President of IFAD,

Heads of State,

Mr. President of the Council of Ministers of Italy,

Ministers,

Delegates and Permanent Representatives of Member States,

Ladies and gentlemen:

I have accepted with pleasure the invitation that you have addressed to me, Mr. President, on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), for this opening ceremony of the forty-second session of the Governing Council of this intergovernmental Organization.

My presence is intended to bring here the desires and needs of the multitude of our brothers who suffer in the world. I wish we could look at their faces without blushing, because finally their appeal had been heard and their concerns addressed. They live in precarious situations: the air is contaminated, natural resources are depleted, the rivers polluted, the soils acidified; they do not have enough water for themselves or their crops; their sanitary infrastructures are very deficient, their houses scarce and defective.

And these situations continue at a time when, on the other hand, our society has achieved great achievements in other areas of knowledge. This means we are facing a society that is capable of advancing its purposes of good; and the battle against hunger and misery will also win, if it is taken seriously. Being determined in this fight is paramount, so that we can hear – not like a slogan but as a truth – “Hunger has no present or future. Only past”. For this, it is necessary to have the help of the international community, civil society and those who possess resources. Responsibilities cannot be evaded, passed from one to another, but rather are to be assumed so as to offer concrete and real solutions. These are the concrete and real solutions that we must pass from one to the other.

The Holy See has always encouraged the efforts made by international agencies to address poverty. Back in December 1964, Saint Paul VI requested in Bombay and subsequently reiterated in other circumstances, the creation of a Global Fund to combat poverty and to give a decisive impetus to the comprehensive development of the most impoverished areas of humanity (cf. *Address to the participants in the World Conference on Food*, 9 November 1974). And since then, his successors have continued to encourage and give impetus to similar initiatives, among which one of the most noteworthy examples is the IFAD.

This 42nd session of the Governing Council of the IFAD continues in this logic and has before it a fascinating and crucial work: to create unprecedented possibilities, to dispel hesitations and to put in each town in conditions to face the needs that afflict it. The international community, which drafted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, needs to take further steps to achieve the 17 objectives that constitute it. In this regard, the contribution of IFAD is essential to be able to fulfil the first two objectives of the Agenda, those related to the eradication of poverty, the fight against hunger and the promotion of food sovereignty. And none of this will be possible without achieving rural development, a development that has been talked about for a long time but that has not come to fruition. And it is paradoxical that a good part of the more than 820 million people suffering from hunger and malnutrition in the world live in rural areas, and – this is paradoxical – are engaged in food production and farming. In addition, the exodus from the countryside to the city is a global trend that we can not ignore in our considerations.

Local development, therefore, has value in itself and not in terms of other objectives. The aim is to ensure that each person and each community may realize their own capacities fully, thus living a human life worthy of that name. It is necessary to help realize this, not from the top down, but with them and for them – “pour et avec”, as the President said.

I urge those who have responsibility in the nations and intergovernmental organizations, as well as those who can contribute from the public and private sectors, to develop the necessary channels so that the appropriate measures can be implemented in the rural regions of the earth, so that they can be responsible architects of its production and progress.

The problems that negatively affect the destiny of many of our brothers in the present time can not be solved in an isolated, occasional or ephemeral way. Today more than ever we have to join forces, achieve consensus, strengthen ties. The current challenges are so intricate and complex that we can not continue confronting them occasionally, with emergency resolutions. It is necessary to grant direct agency to the people affected by poverty, without considering them as mere recipients of aid that can end up generating dependency. Once a people grows accustomed to dependency, it does not develop. The aim is always to affirm the centrality of the human person, remembering that “new processes taking shape cannot always fit into frameworks imported from outside; the need to be based in the local culture itself” (Encylical Letter *Laudato si’*, 144), which is always original. And in this sense, and as has been the case in recent years, the IFAD has achieved better results through greater decentralization, promoting south-south cooperation, diversifying funding sources and modes of action, and promoting action that is based on the evidence and at the same time generates knowledge. I encourage you fraternally to continue on this path, which is humble, but is the right one. A path that should always result in the improvement of the living conditions of the most needy people.

Finally, I share with some more specific reflections regarding the theme “Rural innovation and entrepreneurship”, which guides this session of the Governing Council of the IFAD. It is necessary to wager on innovation, entrepreneurial capacity, the agency of local actors and the efficiency of productive processes to achieve rural transformation, in order to eradicate malnutrition and to develop the rural environment in a sustainable way. And in that context, it is necessary to promote a “science with conscience” and place technology truly at the service of the poor. On the other hand, new technologies should not be contrasted with local cultures and traditional knowledge, but rather should complement and act in synergy with them.

I encourage all of you here present, and those who work regularly in the International Fund for Agricultural Development, so that your work, efforts and deliberations may be for the benefit of the rejected – in this throwaway culture – and for the benefit of the victims of indifference and selfishness; so we can achieve the total defeat of hunger and a copious harvest of justice and prosperity. Thank you.

Greeting of the Holy Father to a group of representatives of indigenous peoples

Distinguished friends,

I thank Ms. Mryna Cunningham for her kind words, and I am happy to greet those who, coinciding with the sessions of the Governing Council, have held the Fourth Global Meeting of the Indigenous Peoples’ Forum, convened by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The theme of its work has been “Promoting indigenous peoples’ knowledge and innovations for climate resilience and sustainable development”.

Your presence here shows that environmental issues are extremely important, and invites us once again to look at our planet, harmed in many regions by human greed, by armed conflicts that engender a range of evils and misfortunes, as well as the natural catastrophes that leave poverty and devastation in their wake. We cannot continue to ignore these scourges, responding to them with indifference or a lack of solidarity, or postponing the measures that will effectively have to confront them. On the contrary, only a vigorous sense of brotherhood will strengthen our hands today to bring help to those who need it, and to open the door of tomorrow to the generations that will come after us.

God created the earth for the benefit of all, so that it would be a welcoming space where no-one would feel excluded and where all could find a home. Our planet is rich in natural resources. And indigenous peoples, with their abundant variety of languages, cultures, traditions, knowledge and ancestral methods, become for all of us

a wake-up call that emphasizes that man is not the owner of nature, but only the custodian, the one who has the vocation to watch over it with care, so that its biodiversity is not lost, and the water can remain healthy and crystal clear, the air pure, the forests leafy and the soil fertile.

Indigenous peoples are a living cry for hope. They remind us that human beings have a shared responsibility in the care of the "common home". And if certain decisions taken so far have ruined it, it is never too late to learn the lesson and acquire a new lifestyle. It is about adopting a way of proceeding that, leaving behind superficial expositions and harmful or exploitative habits, overcomes atrocious individualism, convulsive consumerism and cold selfishness. The earth suffers and the native peoples know about dialogue with the earth, they know what it is to listen to the earth, to see the earth, to touch the earth. They know the art of living well in harmony with the earth. And we have to learn that, maybe we are tempted by a kind of progressive illusion at the cost of the earth. Let us never forget our grandparents' saying: "God always forgives, men sometimes forgive, nature never forgives". And we are seeing this, due to mistreatment and exploitation. You, who know how to dialogue with the earth, are entrusted with transmitting this ancestral wisdom.

If we join forces and, in a constructive spirit, we engage in a patient and generous dialogue, we will end up becoming more aware that we need each other; that action harmful to the environment that surrounds us also negatively affects the serenity and fluidity of coexistence, which at times has been not coexistence but destruction; that the poor can not continue to suffer injustices, and young people have a right to a better world than ours and await convincing answers from us.

Thank you all for the tenacity with which you affirm that the earth is not merely to be exploited without consideration, but it is also for us to sing of it, to take care of it, to caress it. Thank you for raising your voice to assert that respect for the environment must always be safeguarded over exclusively economic and financial interests. The experience of the IFAD, its technical competence, as well as the means available to it, provide a valuable service in carving out roads that recognize 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, in our collective imagination, there is also a danger: that the so-called civilized peoples are "first class" and the so-called indigenous or indigenous peoples are "second class". No. It is the great error of a progress that is uprooted and unbridled from the earth. It is necessary for both peoples to dialogue. Today "cultural mingling" is urgently needed, in which the wisdom of the indigenous peoples can dialogue at the same level with the wisdom of the most developed peoples, without annulling each other. "Cultural mingling" would be the goal towards which we must continue with the same dignity.

As I encourage you to move forward, I implore God to continue to accompany with His blessings your communities, and those in IFAD who work to protect those who live in the rural and poorest areas of the world, but who are richer in the wisdom of living together with nature.

Thank you.

Greeting of the Holy Father to the staff of the IFAD

Ladies and gentlemen,

I could speak in Spanish, which is one of the official languages, but I prefer to use Italian, as I know it is certainly better for you.

I thank Mr. President of the IFAD for his attention, for his courtesy, and I am happy to be able to meet you, who work every day for this important institution of the United Nations. You are at the service of the poorest of the

earth: people who, for the most part, live in rural areas, in regions far from the big cities, often in difficult and burdensome conditions. To all of you present here, as well as to your colleagues who could not be with us – there are many of you who work here! – I address a warm greeting.

Thinking of you, two simple words come to mind. The first, which springs from the heart, is “thank you”. I thank God for your work in the service of a cause as noble as the fight against hunger and poverty in the world. Thank you for going against the grain: the tendency today is towards a slowdown in the reduction of extreme poverty and an increase in the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few. There are a few who have too much, and too many who have too little. There are a few who have too much, and too many who have too little, that is the logic of today. Many do not have food to eat and live hand to mouth, while there are a few who are drowning in the superfluous. This perverse current of inequality is disastrous for the future of humanity. Thank you, then, because you think and act against the current. And thank you also for your silent work, often hidden – I would also say sometimes boring – hidden like the roots of a tree, which cannot be seen, but from there comes the sap that nourishes the whole plant. Perhaps you do not receive many awards or honours, but God sees everything, and knows your self-denial and professionalism – I underline the word professionalism –, appreciates the hours you spend diligently in the office and the sacrifices involved. God never forgets good and knows how to reward those who are good and generous.

Your work brings benefits to many needy and disadvantaged people, who survive with many sufferings at the peripheries of the world. To carry out well this type of service, it is necessary to unite with skill and particular human sensibility. Therefore, I would like to advise you always to cultivate your inner life and the sentiments that expand the heart and render noble persons and peoples. They are treasures that are worth more than any material good. Expand the heart. Thanks also to your contribution, it is possible to realize projects that help children in need – there are many in the world – many of them! – women, and entire families. Many good initiatives are carried out with your support. I thank you therefore for this work, and I do so also on behalf of the many poor people you serve.

The second word I would like to say to you, after “thank you”, is “forward!”. It means continuing your work with renewed commitment, without tiring, without losing hope, without giving in to resignation thinking that it is only a drop in the sea. Mother Teresa said: “Yes, it is a drop in the sea, but with that drop the sea is different”. The secret lies in keeping and nurturing high motivations. In this way, the dangers of pessimism, mediocrity and the tendency to habit are overcome, and you can put enthusiasm into what is done day by day, even in small things, things whose end we cannot see. The word “enthusiasm” is very beautiful: we can also understand it as “putting God in what you do”. It originates there: *en-theos*, enthusiasm, putting God in what you do. Because God never tires of doing good, He never tires of starting over. Each of us has experience: how many times have we started over in our lives! And this is beautiful. He never tires of giving hope. He is the key to not getting tired. And praying – for those who can pray – helps to recharge the batteries with clean energy. It is good for us to ask the Lord to work by our side. And the person who can not pray because he is not a believer must enlarge his heart and desire good. As teenagers say: “send good vibes”, desire the good of others. It is a way of praying for those who do not have faith and are not believers but can do this.

Furthermore, in every document you treat, I advise you to *find a face*. This is important: behind every one of the papers there is a face, ten faces, many faces… Seek a face: the faces of the people who are behind those papers. Placing yourself in their shoes to understand better their situation… It is important not to stay on the surface, but to try to enter into reality to perceive the faces and to reach peoples’ hearts. They are very far away, but they are “transcribed” here. So work becomes a matter of taking others to heart, the events and histories of all.

And a final thing: let us remember what Saint John of the Cross said: “The soul that walks in love neither tires others nor grows tired” (*Sayings of love and light*, 96). To go forward it is necessary to *love.* The question to ask is not “how much do these things I must do weigh upon me?” but rather “how much love to I put in these things that I am doing now?” He who loves has the imagination to discover solutions where others see only problems. He who loves helps the other according to his needs and with creativity, not according to preformed or commonplace ideas. He is a creator: love leads you to create, it is always ahead.

Enthusiasm, looking for faces, loving: in this way you can go forward, and in this way I encourage you too to go ahead, day by day.

God bless you, your loved ones and the work you do at the IFAD to the benefit of many, to defeat the very grave scourge which is hunger in the world. And I too ask something: I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me, or at least to send me good thoughts. Thank you!