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Message of the Holy Father for the 47th Session of the Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the 47th Session of the Governing Council of the International Fund for Agricultural Development

Message of the Holy Father

Mr. President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development,

Delegates and Permanent Representatives of the Member States,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to address you on the occasion of this meeting of the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and take this opportunity to extend to you my warmest greetings. I wish to thank you for the commitment, time and energy you devote to striving for a better world, where the dignity of no-one is violated and where fraternity becomes a reality, a source of joy and hope for all.

Today, our world faces a heartbreaking dichotomy. On the one hand, millions of people are plagued by hunger, while on the other hand, great insensitivity is seen in the waste of food. The food wasted each year generates masses of greenhouse gases, while proper rationing would be enough to feed all the hungry.

These are precarious times. We are pushing the world to dangerous limits: the climate is changing; resources are being plundered; conflict and economic crisis threaten the livelihoods of millions of people. In the face of the crisis, rural communities are the first to suffer, as they do not have the resources to cope with the situation brought about by climate change and hostilities, and are excluded from access to finance. Indigenous peoples are also victims of hardship, deprivation and abuse. Yet their knowledge of natural resource management and

their connection to the environment can help conserve biodiversity.

Another neglected group is women, who are the mainstay of more than half of the food insecure households in rural areas, where many young people lack training, resources and opportunities. Young people are the future of our rural communities, and they hold important potential for innovation and positive change.

Mr. President, this situation impels us to confront existing problems, in particular hunger and poverty, not by accepting abstract strategies or unattainable commitments, but by cultivating the hope that springs from collective action. Let us work together to build a more inclusive agricultural and food system. Research and technology programmes that promote sustainable and environmentally friendly agriculture will also contribute to this. It is also essential to eliminate food wastage and to advocate an equitable distribution of resources. Investment in transport and storage alone can reduce losses for small farmers, who produce a third of the food consumed every day.

I invoke divine help on all of you, so that wisdom, empathy and a spirit of loyal cooperation and service may guide your deliberations in order for the causes of exclusion, poverty and mismanagement of resources, as well as the effects of climate crises, to be eliminated. May your proposals and actions reflect the universal values of justice, solidarity and compassion, and be oriented towards the common good and work for peace and social friendship, bringing about change for the integral development of humanity.

Vatican City, 2 February 2024

FRANCIS
