



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA XXXI SESSIONE DELLA CONFERENZA GENERALE DELLA FAO

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Dal 3 al 13 novembre 2001 si svolge a Roma la XXXI sessione della Conferenza Generale della FAO. Riportiamo qui di seguito l'intervento che il Capo della Delegazione della Santa Sede, S.E. Mons. Agostino Marchetto, ha pronunciato il 7 novembre scorso:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. AGOSTINO MARCHETTO

Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Mr. Jacques Diouf, Director General,
Ladies and gentlemen

1. Thanks to you, the whole human family, in a certain sense, is present here in its different dimensions and components, once more to "speak" on agriculture and its opposite, hunger, to discuss agricultural production's matters and food supply, and especially to find out clear strategies on food security so that we can reach the goal we gave ourselves in 1996: halving the number of starving in the world before 2015.

FAO through this effort, and its presence and activity which wants especially to reach the poorest and the indigent, reminds us how necessary and urgent it is to implement an effective cooperation in order to spread technics and instruments in agriculture, forestry and fishery. Furthermore, there is a need of resources' distribution, starting with food safe supplies. In this commitment there becomes factual the concept of food security, which evolved from a mere initial consideration of technical order, related to the availability of enough foodstuff in stock into a principle which, by now, guarantees the respect of a true and real fundamental right of every human person, and becomes a vital factor of peace and international stability. We do need peace and stability in this particular moment of tension worldwide!

Unfortunately signs of deep worries are back in different areas of the globe, not only regarding peace, but also in those considered dangerous or vulnerable with reference to nutritional levels and health conditions, as well as

food availability and consumption's trends. The existing contrast between the possible real intervention and the will of really operating, seriously threatens the survival of millions and millions, in our world where, as a whole, we live an unprecedented development and progress. From this very point - I believe - was born the inspiration of implementing the "World Food Summit - Five Years Later".

2. Because of this, we cannot forget, here, the situation of starving people, refugees and internally displaced people, of victims of conflicts or violations of fundamental human rights, the situation of those hit by illness and infections, painful realities which not only undermine a suitable living for persons and communities, but also threaten human health and cause evident problems on food security.

Therefore in these particular circumstances, having in mind all the data which are offered to us, the Holy See considers itself obliged to ask you, in your own different tasks and responsibilities, to open up your heart in order to understand that there does not exist an abstract *hunger problem*, but rather there do exist *human beings* like ourselves who in their every day story suffer from hunger and malnutrition, very far away from the wished target of food security. Accepting this perspective we recognize that the human being is in the center of social living with his/her fundamental needs, upon which an international, helpful action has to be based without any further delay or excuse.

Being honest and sincere, if we look around at the motivations settling our contemporary, international life, we can see first of all opposite interests and desires to overcome the other - collision prevails on co-operation! -. Because of this leaders leave pending negotiations and shove into isolationism, not answering to human needs with due effectiveness and readiness. Bearing in mind such a situation and the fact that the "Summit" has been postponed till next year, we would like to underline nevertheless that our expectations and those of men and women of good will go beyond agriculture's and food's sectors, embracing a wider fighting poverty strategy.

The International Community, States, NGOs and civil society alike, must focus their effort on such cross-cutting issue through different ways and means of co-operation, more and more convinced that fight against poverty is not just another subject or field of international relations. We must give an answer to millions of people like us and to their life expectancy so that, deprived of fundamental means of living and work, because of endemic conflicts, lack of central or peripheral structures, and of investments, or under heavy international debt, they do not lose hope and become a nullified mob frustrated and in power of worse instincts.

Furthermore we have to admit that all over the world supply and demand even for food products, are rather deprived of reference to the principle of solidarity, but anchored in a "culture of having" (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 28) and not in an ethic of solidarity, which be apt to express the sentiments of brotherhood and of the common membership, from the part of every State, into the entire family of Peoples and Nations,

3. We all know feasible solutions cannot be reduced to technical choices, but are to be found in each one of our functions and responsibilities, responding to obligations, available to the others, community, State or Nation alike. This approach must become productive polity, redistribution and sharing in a precise aim to re-balance the relation between food needs of the entire population, (even growing) and food availability, already globally sufficient, as we can see from production data. Hence, a new order and balance, in spite of contrasts between developed and developing areas, is not only just mandatory but even possible thinking and reality. Even each one of us can find in him/herself the solution, roughly sketched, in human nature, compassion and impulse towards the other (maybe still rather sleepy). The roots of solutions of the problems are our common human nature, and the natural law, which goes beyond differences of Culture, religion or any other kind.

In Christian tradition - let me mention it, being the Representative of the Holy See - this relationship is quite well expressed in the Gospel's episode of the multiplication of loaves and fishes. When there was a need for food, the Lord answered, once, with a miracle, giving food to the crowd of people. Later they collect all the left-overs not to waste anything (see John 6,12). Well then, the miracle must be realized again to-day, starting in our heart: we ought to be ready, not simply sharing what we have, but above all believing that our donation to the others is possible and just. We should learn also not to waste every and each resource, avoiding as well to have a consumistic mentality that, even though is *a reality for very few*, is becoming unfortunately a *trend for all*.

Such a vision tells us that food security cannot be planned and realized only for emergency operations, or to bring help and relief when people are in dire need, but must be considered also as a regular co-operation action. We are thinking in particular - as far as emergency is concerned - of those never ending conflicts, both internal and international, which bring unutterable suffering to entire communities uprooted from their homes or land, causing therefore land loss and finally deteriorating the levels of food security. War means also hunger; in peace and justice nothing is lost. Let us work therefore for a just peace, following truth, love and freedom!

If in our fight against poverty we should not forget food security we can not neglect also environmental protection's problems and rehabilitation, in view of a sustainable development of the various ecosystems in agriculture, forestry and fishery, because it is from this that come determination and conservation of the levels of security, Food supply and security do not proceed, therefore, just from cultivation of land and its availability; from natural or manmade disasters' protection, but come also from an effective policy issue on environment, from soil and water safety.

Today, moreover, we have to promote and support safe agricultural production systems in those cases that can pose risks to public health, because of lack of basic quality standard's control.

Last but not least we exhort all in order that the pledging undertaken by some Countries to participate into the specific FAO Trust Fund, instituted with the aim of ensuring primary and ongoing interventions towards the hoped for food security, can find many more generous will to join in the effort. At the same time the global investment goal is extremely limited in comparison with the extremely large military' budget or in comparison with needless expenses millions of people are used to in developed countries. And this is having a substantial influence on developing areas. Recent humanitarian measures taken in Afghanistan confirm in any case that when there really is a political will of intervention against hunger, many things can be done, even more or less accurately.

Mr. Chairman,

political choices are therefore required in favour of the poorest people affected by hunger, feeling that the responsibility falls upon the whole International Community. All States, in fact, and in the first place those who can afford it, are requested to fulfil their duty to guarantee the right to be fed for persons and peoples if and when a single State, because of poverty and underdevelopment, or other reasons cannot provide adequate food far everybody.

This is the perspective of the World Food Summit when there was concretised the concept of food security, foreseeing a solidarity effort in order to guarantee food for everybody, or at least to reduce to a half the number of undernourished and starving people, before 2015, through Governments', international Institutions' and different entities' of civil society common commitment.

Thank you!

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