



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA CONFERENZA REGIONALE DELLA FAO PER IL MEDIO ORIENTE

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Il Rev.do Mons. Renato Volante, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso la FAO, ha preso la parola nel corso della XXIX sessione della Conferenza Regionale della FAO per il Medio Oriente, svoltasi a Il Cairo, in Egitto, dal 1° al 5 marzo 2008.

Riportiamo qui di seguito il testo del suo intervento:

• INTERVENTO DI MONS. RENATO VOLANTE

Mr. Chairman,

1. First of all I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address myself to this 29th session of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East. By means of you, Mr. Minister, I wish also to express my gratitude to the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the warm hospitality reserved to this meeting, which has been organized to consider the situation of food and agriculture in this Region and to provide for specific indications to cope with its arising needs.

The Holy See, as you all know, pays a particular attention to those initiatives that are carried out at international level trying to solve situations of hunger, food deficiencies, malnutrition, especially when in some areas of the earth an increase of needs occur. For this reason the Holy See offers the availability to reflect about the data considered by the Conference from that ethical point of view which belongs to its nature and mission.

These data bear witness of the efforts so far deployed by the FAO and by the Governments to help effectively increase crops production, safeguard natural resources and implement agricultural politics, provide for effective and more and more solving interventions on a long term basis. But the Agenda of this meeting reminds us that food security is the outcome of a special commitment in finding the most adequate engagement to carry out, with effectiveness and coherence, programs that grant or improve the fundamental right of each individual and community to be free from hunger. It is about an effort which is directly involved in the respect of the dignity of

the most vulnerable and disadvantaged and for this reason it cannot leave us indifferent.

2. The culture in the Near East Region is characterized by a strong sense of share which leads us to consider the need to intervene in those situations where a large part of people is prevented from a full development. Indeed, we must recognize the central position of the human being in the society and in the decision making processes and we cannot forget that the rural development is undoubtedly one of the methods to overcome these situations. But, just like the FAO indicates, the agricultural activity and food production must be matched with accurate choices, appropriate domestic and international politics and operational guidelines that should be technically supported. To combine traditional knowledge and practices with the innovative know-how as a result of technical and scientific progress is no doubt a challenge for the Countries of this Region. But it cannot either determine different situations or limit anybody's possibilities.

The engagement of this Conference to single out the instruments to grant the rural development in the long-term, can give further momentum to such objectives. This means to provide for a development in the sectors of agriculture, fishery, forestry, and livestock aimed to grant income and sustainable food availability. We cannot draw our attention to the long term without mentioning the overall commitment of the international Community and in particular of the FAO in obtaining the results already established by the World Food Summit and confirmed by *the Millennium Development Goals*: to reduce the number of hungry people by 2015.

The situation of food security in the Region is not without preoccupation even in presence of a general development also on account of food availability destined to people nutrition. Water shortage, besides conditioning the agricultural production, involves the standards of living, with an evident opposition between the real potentialities and the will to take those measures that grant not only nutritional standard and food consumptions but, in a broad sense, social conditions, people health, especially in those areas which are naturally risking desertification,

This could mean to give better attention to the small farmers, often neglected by the institutions and by the cooperation activities. In the same way, some environmental conditions, human-induced factors and animal disease compel nomadic populations to eradicate themselves from their *habitat* thus forcing them to food production and livelihoods different from their traditions.

Mr. Chairman,

3. That of the Holy See Delegation is an invitation to focus the results obtained during this Conference in a perspective that involves the human being as a whole, recalling those fundamental values of history, different cultures, religious experiences and social life in the Near East Region. These aspects easily express concepts of justice and solidarity to be put into practice in politics, rules and actions to fight poverty in all its material and spiritual dimensions. But it is also necessary not to relate poverty and food insecurity to mere technical situations that, although important, could even limit cooperation and assistance.

This is the wish I express to you, aware of the difficulties, but also trusting in the capacities of all those living forces of the Region which are daily engaged in their different functions and responsibilities.

Thank you.

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