



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO MR JACQUES DIOUF, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FAO
ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD FOOD DAY 2008**

H.E. Mr Jacques Diouf

Director General Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

The theme chosen this year for World Food Day, "*World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy*", permits a reflection on what has been achieved in the fight against hunger and on the obstacles to the action of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the face of new challenges that threaten the life of the human family.

This Day is being celebrated at a particularly difficult time for the world nutritional situation, when the availability of foods seems inadequate in relation to consumption and climate change contributes to endangering the survival of millions of men, women and children, forced to leave their country in search of food. These circumstances mean that, together with the FAO, everyone must respond in terms of solidarity with actions free from all conditioning and truly at the service of the common good.

Last June, the *High-Level Conference on World Food Security* afforded the FAO an opportunity to remind the International Community of its direct responsibilities for food insecurity while basic aid for emergency situations risks being limited. In the Message I addressed to the participants at the time I pointed out the need "to adopt courageous measures, that would not stop before hunger and malnutrition, as if they simply concerned unsolvable, endemic phenomena" ([Message of the Holy Father, 2 June 2008, read by Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State, at the headquarters of the FAO, Rome, on that date](#)).

The first task is to eliminate the causes that prevent authentic respect for the person's dignity. The means and resources of which the world disposes today can procure sufficient food to satisfy the growing needs of all. This has been demonstrated by the first results of the effort to increase global production levels in the face of the shortage recorded in recent harvests. So why is it not

possible to prevent so many people suffering the most extreme consequences of hunger? There are numerous reasons for this situation in which abundance and a deficit often coexist. Thus one can mention the food race that does not stop in spite of the constantly diminishing supply of foodstuffs which imposes reductions on the nutritional capacity of the poorest regions of the world, or the lack of determination to conclude negotiations and to check the selfishness of States and groups of countries or further, to put an end to that "unbridled speculation" which affects the mechanisms of prices and consumption. The absence of a correct administration of food resources caused by corruption in public life or growing investments in weapons and sophisticated military technology to the detriment of the primary needs of people also plays an important role.

These very different reasons originate in a false sense of the values on which international relations should be based and, in particular, in the widespread attitude in contemporary culture which gives exclusive priority to the race for material goods, forgetting the true nature of the human person and his deepest aspirations. Unfortunately, the result is the inability of many to take charge of the needs of the poor and to understand them, and the denial of their inalienable dignity. An effective campaign against hunger thus demands far more than a mere scientific study to confront climate change or give priority to the agricultural production of food. It is necessary first of all to rediscover the meaning of the human person, in his individual and community dimensions, from the founding of family life, a source of love and affection from which the sense of solidarity and sharing develop. This setting satisfies the need to build relations between peoples, based on constant and authentic availability, to enable each country to satisfy the requirements of needy people but also to transmit the idea of relations based on a reciprocal exchange of knowledge, values, rapid assistance and respect.

This commitment to promoting effective social justice in international relations demands of each one an awareness that the goods of creation are destined for all, and that in the world community economies must be oriented toward the sharing of these goods, their lasting use and the fair division of the benefits that derive from them.

In the changing context of international relations, where uncertainties seem to be growing and new challenges are glimpsed, the experience acquired to date by the FAO alongside that of other Institutions active in the fight against hunger can play a fundamental role in promoting a new way of understanding international cooperation. One essential condition for increasing production levels, for guaranteeing the identity of indigenous communities as well as peace and security in the world, is to guarantee access to land, thereby favouring farm workers and upholding their rights.

The Catholic Church is close to you in all these efforts. This is testified by the attention with which the Holy See has followed the activity of the FAO since 1948, constantly supporting your endeavours so that your commitment to the cause of the human being might be pursued. This means, in practice, openness to life, respect for the order of Creation and adherence to the ethical

principles that have always been the basis of social life.

With these wishes, I invoke upon you, Mr Director General, as well as upon all the representatives of the Nations, the Blessing of the Most High that you may work generously with a sense of justice for the most neglected peoples.

From the Vatican, 13 October 2008.

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

© Copyright 2008 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana