



The Holy See

*Address of His Holiness Paul VI to the 17th Session
of the Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization**

We are happy to greet first of all the Director General of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, with his collaborators. We thank them for the kind visit they are paying us, in the course of the work of this seventeenth Session of the general Conference. They know how deeply we esteem their tenacious efforts against hunger. Yes, this united work of research, comparison, forecast, organization, mutual help, extended to the whole universe, seeking to cope with the great long-term projects as well as with sudden difficulties, such as the one that Africa has recently met with, deserves our congratulations and encouragement, because it is in the service of the s of all human beings.

We are also happy to contact the Delegations of the member States of FAO that are taking cart in this Session. This meeting, together with study of their works, enables us, too, to pay new attention to the problems of mankind, which expects the earth to provide it with enough to eat, and with a harmonious economic development that is a factor of progress. These words just wish to show them how much we take to heart their work, their hopes and the hopes of the peoples they represent. We are all invited to widen our perspectives, to go forward boldly, to meet the increased needs of the world, without falling behind to a dangerous extent.

At the present Assembly, you are called, Gentlemen to take decisions concerning FAO's internal policies in order to fix, according to the resulting criteria, its ordinary programme for the years 1974-1975; it is a question of implementing concretely in the field the Programmes for the various continents, the campaign against hunger and also the World Food Programme, in agreement with the United Nations. Your decisions must also specify the trends of international policy in !he field of agriculture and food, in accordance with the requirements of the present moment.

In point of fact, the world situation on the agricultural and food planes, such as it appears from the reports recently prepared by FAO, seems to us particularly serious. Anyone who takes to heart the fate of mankind cannot help being concerned by the overall diminution of agricultural and food

production on the world scale in the course of the year 1972. World wheat reserves, in particular, seem so much reduced that the minimum level of world food supplies would be dangerously threatened if there were to occur, for different reasons, crises of production in the immediate future.

Very often, alas, before these worrying facts and forecasts, the international Organizations do not find the real aid or the open support they would be entitled to expect, since it is universal solidarity that constantly prompts their action. There is a contrast here between the growing expectation of the developing countries and the absence of a sufficiently complete and wide commitment on the part of the rich countries.

We take the opportunity to express this painful impression that we have felt. Recent statistics show that the overall public aid contributed by the rich countries is diminishing. It has not yet been possible to reach the contribution of at least one per cent of the national income that each country should give, according to its degree of development, for effective aid to the countries in the growing stage. Yet the Programme of the United Nations for the first and second development decade referred to this percentage on several occasions. And we ourself, nearly ten years ago, alluded to it during our journey in India.

The moment has come to strengthen and widen the movement of solidarity between the peoples of the whole world. In view of the acute situation at present, it is necessary to renew the political resolution for world mutual aid. Today, therefore, allow us to launch an urgent appeal for solidarity, an appeal intended for those in charge, but also to the conscience of all men of good will.

It is not our mission, of course, to suggest the technical solutions or the concrete political choices, in place of the responsible action of the member States of your Organization. But it is up to us to speak in favour of all peoples, for the good of all men, without any discrimination and without any worldly calculation.

In the name of humanity, we once more ask rulers to show, through their authorized representatives, and even immediately in the course of this FAO conference, that they will not let themselves be confined in the too narrow perspective of the interests of their nations alone nor of the immediate results of particular political enterprises. Rather, let them reach decisions that will oblige them to collaborate more on the international plane to ensure economic development and the progress of society; in this field, they will constantly pay special attention to the developing countries.

We are aware that the economy and the finances of even highly developed countries are going through a complex and difficult period at present. This does not dispense us, however, from urging them to overcome temptations to isolation, protectionism or direct relations that would make their power weigh on weaker and more exposed countries.

We appeal to the same effect to world public opinion and to the conscience of the peoples richest in resources, technology and human energies. The latter must take into consideration not only the needs of their own country, but also those of others, and therefore support political choices, demand concrete actions that aim at the good of all men, in the harmony of brotherly understanding.

We trust that the work of this session of the FAO Conference will open up prospects of real solidarity, which will make it possible to pass from the solution of emergency aid to a more systematic plan to ensure food supplies.

We very willingly gave our support to the recent "Sahelian zone operation", also receiving several requests, yours, Mr. Director-General, that of the local Churches, that of persons or agencies anxious to respond to both the urgency and extent of this human distress. We then appealed to peoples and governments for rapid and generous collaboration. Furthermore, we saw to it that entities of the Holy See were present actively, particularly our Council Cor Unum, the Catholic International Organizations and the institutions of the local Churches.

But we are deeply convinced that far vaster tasks than mere occasional aid are looming on the horizon for the International Community, and in particular for the Intergovernmental Organizations, in order to draw up long-term plans, in the broader perspectives of multilateral world action.

We hope that the political will of States will be capable of moving towards an international instrument that will entail a real commitment, inducing them to go beyond the form of generous gifts that are occasional and variable. Thus it would be possible to arrive at forms of permanent commitment in justice, which responding both to the duties of peoples according to their prosperity, and to the needs of the underprivileged countries, would constitute a world food supply system.

Like all the international Organizations of the family of the United Nations, you are looking, we think to the period of this second decade in which it will be necessary to examine carefully to what extent and how the international Community is attaining the purposes it set itself to satisfy the most imperious needs of the world populations and the most legitimate expectations of a progress guaranteed to everyone, overcoming imbalances and discriminations. Could it not also be desired that greater attention should be given to the possibilities of establishing a situation of justice ensuing from multilateral relations and programmes guaranteed by Intergovernmental Organizations?

Thus we renew our appeal, with all the hope it permits, in order that, overcoming ever recurring difficulties and false national prestige, decisions may be taken calculated to promote a just world policy for agriculture and food in the service of the urgent needs and real interests of mankind. This is part of that full humanism for which we have so often wished and which entails the

complete development of the whole man and every man (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 42).

On the strength of this hope, we pray to God, the Father of all men, to assist you in your work and inspire those whom you represent, in order that the best possible use will be made of the astonishing possibilities of solidarity that the Lord gives to the men of our time.

*ORa n.48 p.3;

Paths to Peace p.315-317.
