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Message of the Holy Father to the Director of the FAO on the occasion of the ceremony for World Food Day

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), His Excellency Mr. Qu Dongyu, on the occasion of the ceremony which took place in Rome for World Food Day:

Message of the Holy Father

Your Excellency,

The annual celebration of World Food Day brings us face to face with one of humanity's greatest challenges: overcoming hunger once and for all is an ambitious goal. The UN Food Systems Summit in New York on 23 September highlighted the urgency of adopting innovative solutions able to transform the way we produce and consume food for the well-being of people and the planet. This is imperative to speed up post-pandemic recovery, combat food insecurity and move towards the achievement of all the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

FAO's proposed theme this year: "Our actions are our future. Better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life", underlines the need for concerted action to ensure that everyone has access to diets that ensure maximum environmental sustainability and are both adequate and affordable. Each of us has a role to play in transforming food systems for the benefit of people and the planet, and "all of us can cooperate [...] for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents" (Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, 14).

We are currently witnessing a real paradox in terms of access to food: on the one hand, more than 3 billion people do not have access to a nutritious diet, while on the other hand, almost 2 billion are overweight or obese due to a poor diet and a sedentary lifestyle. If we do not want to jeopardise the health of our planet and our entire population, we need to actively engage in change at all levels and reorganise food systems as a whole.

I would like to indicate four areas where action is urgently needed: in the field, at sea, at the table and in reducing food losses and waste. Our lifestyles and daily consumption practices influence global and environmental dynamics, but if we are to make a real difference, we must encourage producers and consumers to make ethical and sustainable choices and raise awareness among the younger generations of the important role they play in making a world without hunger a reality. Each of us can play our part in this noble cause, starting with our daily lives and the simplest gestures. Knowing our Common Home, protecting it and being aware of its importance is the first step towards being stewards and promoters of the environment.

The pandemic gives us the opportunity to change course and invest in a global food system that can deal sensibly and responsibly with future crises. In this regard, the valuable contribution of small-scale producers is crucial, facilitating their access to innovation that, when applied to the agri-food sector, can strengthen resilience to climate change, increase food production and support those working in the food value chain.

The fight against hunger demands we overcome the cold logic of the market, which is greedily focused on mere economic profit and the reduction of food to a commodity, and strengthening the logic of solidarity.

Mr. Director-General, the Holy See and the Catholic Church stand side by side with the FAO and those other bodies and individuals who do their best to ensure that the fundamental rights of no human being be undermined or disregarded. May those who sow seeds of hope and harmony feel the support of my prayer that their initiatives and projects may be ever more fruitful and successful. With these sentiments, I invoke the blessing of Almighty God on you and on all those who, with tenacity and generosity, combat poverty and hunger in the world.

From the Vatican, 15 October 2021
