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Message of the Holy Father Francis, delivered by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, at the G20 Leaders Summit

The following is the Message of the Holy Father Francis, delivered by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, at the G20 Leaders Summit, taking place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 18 to 19 November:

Message

*To His Excellency Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva,
President of the Federative Republic of Brazil*

I would like to extend my congratulations to you for your role in chairing the Group of 20, which represents the largest economies in the world. I also extend warm greetings to all those present at this G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro. It is my sincere hope that the discussions and outcomes of this event will contribute to the advancement of a better world and a prosperous future for generations to come.

As I wrote in my Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, “politics needs to make the effective elimination of hunger one of its foremost and imperative goals. Indeed, ‘when financial speculation manipulates the price of food, treating it as just another commodity, millions of people suffer and die from hunger. At the same time, tons of food are thrown away. This constitutes a genuine scandal. Hunger is criminal; food is an inalienable right’. Often, as we carry on our semantic or ideological disputes, we allow our brothers and sisters to die of hunger and thirst” (189).

However, in the context of a globalised world facing a multitude of interconnected challenges, it is essential to recognise the significant pressures currently being exerted on the international system. These pressures are being manifested in various forms, including the intensifying of wars and conflicts, terrorist activities, assertive foreign policies, and acts of aggression, as well as the persistence of injustices. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the Group of 20 identifies new avenues for achieving a stable and lasting peace in all conflict-related areas, with the objective of restoring the dignity of those affected.

The armed conflicts that are currently witnessed are not only responsible for a significant number of deaths, mass displacement, and environmental degradation; they are also contributing to an increase in famine and poverty, both directly in the affected areas and indirectly in countries that are hundreds or thousands of miles away from the conflict zones, particularly through the disruption of supply chains. Wars continue to exert a considerable strain on national economies, especially due to the exorbitant amount of money spent on weapons and armaments.

Furthermore, there is a significant paradox in terms of access to food. On the one hand, over 3 billion people lack access to a nutritious diet. On the other hand, almost 2 billion individuals are overweight or obese due to poor nutrition and a sedentary lifestyle. This calls for a concerted effort to actively engage in a change at all levels and reorganise food systems as a whole (cf. *Message for World Food Day 2021*).

Moreover, it is a matter of great concern that society has not yet found a way to address the tragic situation of those facing starvation. The silent acceptance by human society of famine is a scandalous injustice and a grave offence. Those who, through usury and greed, cause the starvation and death of their brothers and sisters in the human family are indirectly committing a homicide, which is imputable to them (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2269). No effort should be spared to lift people out of poverty and hunger.

It is important to keep in mind that the issue of hunger is not merely a matter of insufficient food; rather, it is a consequence of broader social and economic injustices. Poverty, in particular, is a significant contributing factor to hunger, perpetuating a cycle of economic and social inequalities that are pervasive in our global society. The relationship between hunger and poverty is inextricably linked.

It is thus evident that immediate and decisive action must be taken to eradicate the scourge of hunger and poverty.

Such action must be undertaken in a joint and collaborative manner, with the involvement of the entire international community. The implementation of effective measures requires a concrete commitment from governments, international organisations and society as a whole. The centrality of the God-given human dignity of every individual, access to basic goods and the fair distribution of resources must be prioritised in all political and social agendas.

Moreover, the eradication of malnutrition cannot be achieved by merely increasing global food production. Indeed, there is already sufficient food to feed all the people on our planet; it is merely unequally distributed. It is therefore essential to recognise the significant amount of food that is wasted on a daily basis. Tackling food waste is a challenge that requires collective action. In this way, resources can be redirected towards investments that help the poor and hungry meet their basic needs. Furthermore, it is equally necessary to implement food systems that are environmentally sustainable and beneficial to local communities.

It is clear that an integrated, comprehensive, and multilateral approach is crucial to addressing these challenges. Given the magnitude and geographical scope of the issue, short-term solutions are insufficient. Long-term vision and strategy are necessary to combat effectively malnutrition. A sustained and consistent commitment is essential to achieving this goal, and it must not be contingent on immediate circumstances.

In this sense, it is my hope that the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty can have a significant impact on global efforts to combat hunger and poverty. The Alliance could begin by implementing the long-standing proposal of the Holy See, which calls for redirecting funds currently allocated to weapons and other military expenditures towards a global fund designed to address hunger and promote development in the most impoverished countries. This approach would help prevent citizens in these countries from having to resort to violent or illusory solutions, or from leaving their countries in search of a more dignified life (cf. Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 262).

It is imperative to recognise that the failure to fulfil society's collective responsibilities towards the poor should not result in the transformation or the revision of the initial goals into programmes that, rather than addressing

the genuine needs of people, ignore them. In these efforts local communities, cultural and traditional richness of peoples cannot be disregarded or destroyed in the name of a narrow and short-sighted concept of progress. To do so would, in reality, risk becoming synonymous with 'ideological colonisation'. In this sense, interventions and projects should be planned and implemented in response to the needs of the people and their communities, and not imposed from above or by entities that seek only their own interests or profit.

For its part, the Holy See will continue to promote human dignity and to make its specific contribution to the common good, offering the experience and engagement of Catholic institutions worldwide, so that in our world no human being, as a person loved by God, be deprived of his or her daily bread.

May Almighty God abundantly bless your works and efforts for the genuine progress of the entire human family.

From the Vatican, 18 November 2024

FRANCIS
