

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0254

Sabato 22.05.2004

INTERVENTO DELL'OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE PRESSO LE ORGANIZZAZIONI DELL'O.N.U. PER L'ALIMENTAZIONE E L'AGRICOLTURA ALLA XXVII SESSIONE DELLA CONFERENZA REGIONALE DELLA FAO PER L'ASIA E IL PACIFICO

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Nel corso della XXVII Sessione della Conferenza Regionale della FAO per l'Asia ed il Pacifico, svoltasi a Pechino dal 17 al 21 maggio 2004, l'Osservatore Permanente presso le Organizzazioni delle Nazioni Unite per l'Alimentazione e l'Agricoltura, Mons. Renato Volante, ha pronunciato il 20 maggio scorso l'intervento di cui riportiamo di seguito il testo:

• INTERVENTO DI MONS. RENATO VOLANTE

Mr. Chairman,

Mr. Director General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. In addressing this 27th FAO Regional Conference for Asia and Pacific, I wish first of all to express thanks for the invitation extended to the Holy See. This presence, wishes to confirm the interest, which she takes in all the FAO's initiatives, including those at regional level.

Participation in the different Regional Conferences, in fact, permits the Holy See not only to know more directly the various agricultural and food realities, but also to encourage the FAO in the fulfillment of its noble responsibilities aimed at the fundamental objectives of liberating humanity from hunger and malnutrition.

To you, Mr. Minister of Agriculture of People's Republic of China the congratulations of the Holy See's Delegation on your election as Chairman of this Conference, accompanied by the thanks for the hospitality which your Government is extending to our meeting.

I should also like to avail of the opportunity to renew to the Director General, Mr. Jacques Diouf, the expression of our respectful and sincere support in his responsibilities, and confirm the attention of the Holy See to his efforts aimed at an ever greater effectiveness in the activities of the FAO, also through a true decentralization of its structure and therefore of its action.

2. My Delegation, with relation to the principal points on the agenda, desires to offer here her own contribution of ideas, in a perspective which in its appearance may be different to that of the Countries of the Region.

As you know, the international presence of the Holy See is motivated exclusively by the desire to render a common service to the human family as a whole. She wishes in this way to testify her constructive interest in the cause of human person, the attention to its fundamental needs, beginning with the primary right to nourishment that is an essential component of the right to life. The life, our life, is the focal point of the natural order with its rules and autonomy, in which everyone fully realizes his fundamental dignity in spiritual and material perspective. The importance of this comprehensive dimension of the human life is emphasized, today as well, by the different Asian cultures, philosophies and religions and therefore request a holistic approach to the international action for development and growth of peoples and countries.

The necessity which seems to us to have emerged from the agenda of this Conference is that of giving to the FAO's activities in Asia and Pacific an even more consistent motivation, which does not stop at the technical data, but is able to reinvigorate them through an ethical standpoint. This is the prospect given also by achievements in the Region, which seem to manifest the essential necessity that international action in the agricultural and food sector be reinforced and above all be re-thought in the light of the real imbalances which the situation presents, but taking into account the different experiences and traditional practice that come out by the authentic Asian values.

During this year the International Community, and particularly the FAO, invited us to consider the importance of rice in the agricultural production and then in the nutritional programs. It has among the other agricultural products of the Asian and Pacific Regions a particular importance in contributing to guarantee an adequate food security level. This food-crop generally has high importance in the food traditions and in the economic processes, as indicated by the rice farming system, methods of cultivation, production, trade and consumption. Moreover, today we can recognize the rice role especially in the strategy of food security wisely suggested by the FAO, involved in the international action to alleviate poverty.

In fact, it seems to us that the situations of food security are becoming more serious, the growth of systems of production that are more and more linked to the large-scale methods, and the environmental degradation which for the world of agriculture concern *inter alia* the land degradation and the water scarcity. This clearly lowers the levels of food security.

In the perspective of these challenges, it becomes always more necessary to look to the future, to understand what can be the role of the FAO in the coming years in this Region. A role certainly linked to the choices of this Conference and strongly conditioned by the modalities of the entire implementation of the strategy of World Food Summit.

In this sense I should like to recall the exhortation which, inaugurating the Summit in 1996, John Paul II addressed to the Heads of State and Government: «It is to be hoped that your reflections will also inspire concrete measures to combat the food insecurity, which claims as its victims too many of our brothers and sisters in humanity, for nothing will change at the world level, if national leaders do not put into practice the commitments written in your plan of action for implementing economic and food policies based not only on profit but also on sharing in solidarity» (FAO, *Report of the World Food Summit*, Doc. WFS/96/REP/Part One, Annex I).

Mr. Chairman,

3. In realizing this particular effort, which is today underlined by the Millennium Goals, I should like to confirm the

availability of the Catholic Church, in its various sectors and institutions, to cooperate in the activities of humanization in the realities of hunger, underdevelopment and poverty. A sustain that would be considered not only as a possibility of logistical support, but also a source of ideal and programmatic inspiration.

In fact, in guaranteeing to every person the possibility of having an adequate and qualitative standard of food security, each of us becomes a participant in the great design of Creation and has the opportunity to plant values before interests. The evolution of the international relations today and the desire of every people to peaceful coexistence, cause new forms of *solidarity in the action* and of *communion in the interests* to be essential, according the fundamental principles of humanity and justice.

Thank You.

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