

Statement by the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to IFAD

Mr Chair of the Governing Council,
Distinguished delegates,
Mr President of IFAD,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me express my appreciation for the opportunity to speak.

I am honoured to convey greetings to you from Pope Francis, who closely follows the initiatives pursued by your organization in the United Nations hub here in Rome. The Holy Father has on multiple occasions shared the hope with the international community that they will invest in the development of people, rather than wars or arms trade and production. This is in tune with the efforts IFAD undertakes each day to provide financial support for the world's most disadvantaged rural people, working over the long term towards their autonomy and seeking to eliminate poverty and food insecurity wherever people are suffering the most.

At this arduous juncture beset with difficulties, we see clearly that IFAD's work is more essential than ever. The pandemic has unleashed the worst global recession since the Second World War, and those who were already living in highly precarious conditions are bearing the brunt of it. His Holiness had already predicted, with great foresight, that "those most vulnerable, the invisible, those without an abode, are at risk of paying the highest price",¹ and unfortunately that has been the case. So the setbacks caused by COVID-19 have only exacerbated the deep-seated inequalities and injustices experienced by some countries and by people such as women, young people and small-scale farmers living in rural areas.

As at the end of the world war, now is the time for reconstruction. This time we need to build not atop the rubble of bombed-out buildings, but upon the cruel and harmful consequences caused by the coronavirus in the social and economic spheres – through the mandatory isolation of millions of people, the closing of borders, the massive collapse in world trade, the forced displacement of entire populations, increased unemployment and disruptions in food supply to the hotspots of viral infection.

In pursuing the imperative of recovery we must not forget that even before the pandemic another global challenge had revealed the pressing need to bring new ideas, unite our forces and encourage dialogue and authentic, responsible collaboration within the international community. I refer to the social and environmental crisis. Science has argued energetically and often that if we wish to address the harmful repercussions of catastrophic extreme climate change, we must work together effectively and with determination. This is an appeal that Pope Francis has made to the family of nations repeatedly and vehemently, arguing that "We find ourselves facing an epochal change, a cultural challenge that calls for commitment on the part of all, particularly those countries possessed of greater means. These countries need to take a leading role in the areas of climate finance, decarbonization in the economic system and in people's lives, the promotion of a circular economy, providing support to more vulnerable countries working to adapt to the impact of climate change and to respond to the loss and damage it has caused."²

The only way we can safeguard our planet and deal with the climate degradation of our age is to come up with serious, well founded projects that encompass all facets of the problem and are able to mount a resilient response to present and future challenges. The objective we must pursue resolutely and incisively is the full development of each person as a member of our unique and universal human family. In this sense, let us

¹ Pope FRANCIS, Message to the Street Paper Network, 21 April 2020.

² Pope FRANCIS, Message to the participants in COP 26, Glasgow, 31 October to 12 November 2021.

never forget, in our proposals, that we all have “the moral obligation to care for one another”,³ to echo the Pope’s words.

To make this ecological transition we must rely on innovation, placing it at the core of national environmental policies and accompanying it with a substantial economic contribution. We must provide training for small-scale farmers, women and small and medium-sized rural enterprises, to avoid falling into the trap of producing yet another example of discrimination and social exclusion of the smallest developing countries. “As a result it is necessary to move beyond short-term technological or economic approaches and to give full consideration to the ethical dimension in seeking solutions to present problems or proposing initiatives for the future”.⁴ This means leaving no one behind and acting with solidarity in implementing the common good.

Based on these convictions, the Holy See supports IFAD’s initiatives in pursuit of integrated and effective agricultural development to address the real needs of poor rural people, food production in low-income countries and the world’s poorest areas – thus showing our understanding that our shared home was given to us to be cared for and managed wisely, not greedily devoured.

Many thanks.

³ Pope FRANCIS, Message to Professor Klaus Schwab, Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, 21-24 January 2020.

⁴ Ibid.