



BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA SETTIMA SESSIONE SPECIALE DEL CONSIGLIO DEI DIRITTI DELL'UOMO SUL DIRITTO AL CIBO

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Durante la Settima Sessione Speciale del Consiglio dei Diritti dell'Uomo sul Diritto al Cibo, svoltasi a Ginevra il 22 maggio 2008, S.E. Mons. Silvano M. Tomasi, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite a Ginevra, ha pronunciato l'intervento che riportato qui di seguito:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. SILVANO M. TOMASI

Mr. President,

1. The Delegation of the Holy See fully supports the priority attention accorded to the current food crisis by means of this special session of the Human Rights Council. The primary tasks before the global community are to develop a coherent response within the context of the multiple initiatives underway and to "mainstream" this crisis within the framework of human rights. We are faced with the overwhelming challenge to adequately feed the world's population at a time when there has been a surge in global food prices that threatens the stability of many developing countries. This calls for urgent concerted international action. This crisis shines a "red light" of alarm on the negative consequences affecting the long-neglected agriculture sector when more than half of the world's population struggle to make their livelihood through such work. It calls attention to the dysfunction of the global trade system when four million people annually join the ranks of the 854 million plagued by chronic hunger. Hopefully, this session will open the eyes of public opinion on the worldwide cost of hunger, which so often results in lack of health and education, conflicts, uncontrolled migrations, degradation of the environment, epidemics, and even terrorism.

2. The international community long has recognized a right to food in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (art. 25) and in the International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights of 1966 (art. 25), just to mention some juridical instruments that proclaim the fundamental right to freedom from hunger and malnutrition. Conferences and Declarations of intergovernmental agencies rightfully have concluded that hunger is not due to lack of food but rather is caused by the lack of access, both physical and financial, to agricultural resources. The first Millennium Development Goal aims to reduce by one-half the number of the people living in

extreme poverty and hunger by the year 2015. Society must confront the hard fact that stated goals very often are not matched by consistent policies. As a result, many millions of men, women and children face hunger everyday. Higher prices may cause some inconvenience to families in developed countries since they find it necessary to spend 20% of their income on food. However, such prices are life threatening for the one billion people living in poor countries since they are forced to spend nearly all their daily income of \$1 per day in search of food. The grave task before us is to design and implement effective policies, strategies, and actions that will result in food sufficiency for all.

3. The problem of adequate food production is more than a temporary emergency . It is structural in nature and should be addressed in the context of economic growth that is just and sustainable. It requires measures dealing not only with agriculture and rural development but also with health, education, good governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. The impact of international trade on the right to food and the liberalisation of trade in agricultural products tend to favour multinational enterprises and, therefore to harm production by the small local farms, which represent the base of the food security in developing countries. A renewed commitment to agriculture, especially in Africa, appears necessary. To this end, investments in agriculture and rural development are important. Moreover, the duty of solidarity toward the most vulnerable members of society must be recognized. When seen through this ethical perspective, hoarding and price speculation are unacceptable and individual property rights, including those of women, must be recognised. The priority in food production should be to benefit people. Unfair subsidies in agriculture need to be eliminated. To remedy the limitations faced by small farms, cooperative structures can be organised. The utilization of land for food production and for the production for other resources eventually has to be balanced, not by the market, but by mechanisms that respond to the common good.

Mr. President,

4. In this complex and urgent debate on the right to food, a new mentality is required. It should place the human person at the centre and not focus simply on economic profit. Due to lack of food, too many poor die each day, while immense resources are allocated for arms. The international community must be galvanised into action. The right to food regards the future of the human family as well as peace in the global community.

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