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Statement of the Holy See at the Second Committee of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Agenda Item 25: "Agriculture development, food security and nutrition" (New York, October 28, 2014)

Here below the Statement by Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations at the Second Committee of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Agenda Item 25: *Agriculture development, food security and nutrition* (New York, 28 October 2014):

Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza

Mr. Chair,

Coming together to discuss Agriculture development, food security and nutrition is not and should not become a routine annual exercise. Rather, it must be an occasion for us to echo the cry of the hundreds of millions of people throughout the world who suffer from chronic hunger and food insecurity. It should also remind us of the paradox that while so many die of hunger, an enormous quantity of food is wasted every day.

According to the Secretary General's report 011 Agricultural Development, Food Security and Nutrition (A/69/279), since 1990 there has been a 17% decrease in the number of people suffering from chronic hunger. While this fact indicates a measure of effectiveness of the efforts over more than two decades in reducing chronic hunger, it also means that we still have almost 850 million people suffering from acute hunger. The number is already shocking in itself, but what must shock us even more is the fact that behind those numbers are real people, with their fundamental dignity and rights. Thus, eradicating hunger is not only a high priority development goal; it is a moral imperative.

Yet it is not for lack of food in the world that they suffer acute hunger, because the current levels of world food production are sufficient to feed everyone. The problem lies elsewhere, such as in the lack of conservation technologies among smallholder producers, in weak or absent government support to incentivize the commercialization of products, or in the lack of infrastructure for better food distribution and marketing. Sadder still, this paradox is also due to a throwaway culture in affluent societies, to deliberate large-scale destruction of food products to keep prices and profit margins high, as well as to other policies that override the common

objective of food security for all.

The human and socio-economic costs of hunger and malnutrition are enormous. There should be no priority greater than this, as food and nutrition underpin all else, be it health, education, the maintenance of peace or the enjoyment of rights. As we renew our efforts to eliminate hunger and malnutrition in the world, the whole "United Nations Family" must then embrace it, putting it at the forefront of its collective efforts. It is for this reason that the Holy See welcomes the incorporation of food security, nutrition, and sustainable agriculture as components of the sustainable development goals and their inclusion within the post-2015 Development Agenda.

It is also along this line that the Holy See welcomes the focus that the report of the Secretary General on Agricultural Development, Food Security and Nutrition (A/69/279) puts on those regions of the world where hunger and malnutrition are still at unacceptable levels. The Holy See also appreciates the report's focus on groups most vulnerable to malnutrition, like pregnant women and children below five years old. Chronic malnutrition and under-nutrition continue to affect too many of the world's children. Indeed, each year 51 million children under five years old waste away due to malnutrition, of whom close to seven million die. The Secretary General's report thus alerts us to the enormous challenges that lie ahead.

Mr. Chair,

The theme of this year's World Food Day, Family Farming: feeding the world, caring for the earth, tells us that the family is key in the fight to end hunger. It plays a central role in reaching the sustainable future we want. It is a key component of the food systems we need to lead healthier lives. Its on-the-ground presence makes it a privileged agent for promoting a healthy environment for present and future generations. This recognition of the role of the family must be accompanied with policies and initiatives that really respond to the needs of farming families and communities.

Mr. Chair,

In closing, let me draw your attention to next month's international conference on nutrition in Rome. It aims to bring together government leaders, other top-level policymakers and representatives of intergovernmental organizations and civil society, to take stock of progress made in improving nutrition and to seek new ways to boost national and global efforts to improve health. Pope Francis plans to address the conference to express his commitment to the future we want, a future that starts by our common resolve to ensure that no one goes to bed hungry.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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