



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS OF THE III GLOBAL MEETING OF THE
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' FORUM OF THE INTERNATIONAL
FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD)**

*Room adjacent to Paul VI Audience Hall
Wednesday, 15 February 2017*

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to welcome you at the conclusion of the third Indigenous Peoples' Forum convened by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, which this year is celebrating the fortieth anniversary of its foundation.

You have come together to identify ways of giving greater economic empowerment to indigenous peoples. I believe that the central issue is how to reconcile the right to development, both social and cultural, with the protection of the particular characteristics of indigenous peoples and their territories.

This is especially clear when planning economic activities which may interfere with indigenous cultures and their ancestral relationship to the earth. In this regard, the right to prior and informed consent should always prevail, as foreseen in Article 32 of the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Only then is it possible to guarantee peaceful cooperation between governing authorities and indigenous peoples, overcoming confrontation and conflict.

A second aspect concerns the development of guidelines and projects which take into account indigenous identity, with particular attention to young people and women; not only considering

them, but including them! For governments this means recognizing that indigenous communities are a part of the population to be appreciated and consulted, and whose full participation should be promoted at the local and national level. Marginalization cannot be permitted, nor labelling according to class, first class, second class... Integration with full participation.

IFAD can contribute effectively to this needed *road map* through its funding and expertise, keeping in mind that “a technological and economic development which does not leave in its wake a better world and an integrally higher quality of life cannot be considered progress” (Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, 194).

And you, in your traditions, in your culture – because what you bring with you from your history is culture – you live progress with particular care for mother earth. At this time when humanity is sinning gravely by not caring for the earth, I urge you to continue giving witness to this, and not to accept new forms of technology, even though they are valid and good, not to accept them when they destroy the earth, the environment, the ecological balance, and end up destroying the patrimony of knowledge.

I offer you heartfelt thanks for your presence, and I ask the Almighty to bless your communities and to enlighten the work of all those responsible for governing IFAD. Thank you very much.