

Informal translation
Statement of his Eminence
The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Prof. Ahmed Al-Tayyib,
at the opening of the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board
of the World Food Programme
18-21 November 2019

In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Honorable brothers!

Allow me to greet you with Islam greeting: *Peace and Blessing of Allah be with you!*

The matter I am addressing you today is extremely important, as it touches upon the lives of the poor, the miserable and the vulnerable people in the world. I thank the Executive Board of the World Food Programme for the efforts aimed at ensuring that all people enjoy a decent and secure life.

Distinguished audience!

Food security faces a severe crisis nowadays. It is unfortunate that this crisis is not a result of shortage of resources, as many could imagine, but it is a consequence of the absence of fair distribution of resources and the unsustainable production. Despite the fact that the world produces sufficient food. Therefore, the third of total food production wasted left more than 800 million people worldwide suffer from lack of adequate food.

The mismanagement of resources and the absence of justice have caused the spread of poverty, hunger and disease among millions all over the world. It is ironic that the people suffering from the crises are the ones who provide the world with its food needs. It is not a secret that small farmers and fishermen produce around 70 percent of global food supplies. Nevertheless, they are the most affected by poverty and disease and most of them lack the minimum requirements of decent life.

Al-Azhar Al-Sharif has made and continues to make great efforts to help the poor and vulnerable people, as well as eliminate disease, through dispatching medical and relief convoys to support the poorest in Egypt and around the world without any kind of discrimination on the basis of religion, race or color. As we try to heal the wounds and bring joyfulness to the poor and vulnerable people, it is clear that poverty and disease cannot be eradicated without a universal will and a sincere desire of everyone, first and foremost, the rich countries which extended their wealth from utilization of the resources of the poor countries.

From this podium, I would like to call for deep thinking of reaching an international binding agreement to guarantee that each human being has the right to access food and medicine that should not be wasted or monopolized by individuals, corporations or states and should not be considered as commercial commodities as well. Everyone should work towards ensuring access to food and medicine and provided at a reasonable price for those who can afford them and free of charge for those who cannot afford.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my thanks to you and to all the devoted individuals who work for humanity, regardless of religion, color or race, based on the principle of human fraternity that Al-Azhar has been working to materialize in the world that I and my brother, His Eminence Pope Francis II of the Vatican have included in the document of Human Fraternity that was announced in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

May Allah grant you success in your endeavors for the peace and good of humanity.

May Peace and Blessing of Allah be with you all!