

Global food crisis caused by selfishness, speculation, says pope

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI denounced the continuing shortages of food around the world and said the causes included selfishness and “unbridled speculation.”

At the root of global hunger is a prevailing materialist culture among developed countries, in which the needs of the poor are routinely forgotten, the pope said.

His comments came in a written message Oct. 16, World Food Day. The text was addressed to Jacques Diouf, director-general of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization.

The pope said it was clear, even during recent months of food scarcity in places around the globe, that the international community has the resources to feed all the world’s people.

Instead, poverty coexists with abundance, he said, and he gave several reasons.

First, he pointed to the “race for consumption” that has not slowed even during the recent food shortages and that hurts the nutritional capacity of poorer countries.

Second, he said international negotiations have failed to “curb the selfishness of states or groups of countries or to put an end to the unbridled speculation that is affecting the mechanisms of pricing and consumption.”

The pope also cited the lack of proper administration of food resources caused by corruption in public life, as well as increasing expenditures on weapons and sophisticated military technology to the detriment of basic necessities.

These causes find their origin in a “false sense of values” in international relations, and “especially in that widespread attitude in contemporary culture which privileges only the pursuit of material goods, forgetting the true nature of the human person and his deepest aspirations,” he said.

For these reasons, he said, a campaign against world hunger demands much more than scientific studies over climate change or biofuels.

Instead, he said, the world needs to recognize that the goods of creation are destined for everyone, and that “in the world community, economic life should be oriented toward the sharing of these goods, toward their long-term usage and the fair distribution of the resulting benefits.”

He said one essential condition to raising food production and preserving the identity of indigenous communities was to guarantee access to land in a way that favors agricultural workers and protects their rights.