

***INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT - TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD:
THE HOLY SEE AND THE 2030 AGENDA***

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Your Excellencies, My Dear Friends:

I bring you all warm greetings of the Holy See, and to begin, I wish to thank the organizers, and all who are attending this Special Event. In particular I am grateful to the Secretary General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Mr. Mukisha Kituyi, and the *International Geneva* for co-organizing this Special Event on *Integral Human Development- Transforming our world: the Holy See and the 2030 Agenda*. It is, in particular, a great pleasure for me to return to Geneva to share some considerations of the Holy See on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Dear friends, as you may remember, last July, in Nairobi, UNCTAD's mandate was renewed with a strong focus on building an *inclusive economy*. In fact, the Political Declaration issued by this Conference, Nairobi *Azimio*, noted that the world: "still face[s] an unequal global distribution of resources and opportunities, but today we are better placed to take concrete actions that can address the inequalities between and among countries and peoples". In 2015, world leaders agreed on how to better position the international community to address some of the most pressing global challenges. These agreements and outcomes collectively offer a blueprint for how the global economy, society and environment should look in 2030.

Sustainable development is unthinkable without *inclusive prosperity*, that is, "prosperity for all". Pope Francis sees in the SDGs a hopeful sign of *inclusive prosperity* and development. In his address to the United Nation General Assembly (25 Sept. 2015), Pope Francis stated that the adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* "is an important sign of hope (...) solemn commitments, however, are not enough, although they are certainly a necessary step toward

solutions. Our world demands of all government leaders a will which is effective, practical and constant, concrete steps and immediate measures for preserving and improving the natural environment and thus putting an end as quickly as possible to the phenomenon of social and economic exclusion".¹ The Holy See believes that this hope will be realized only if the Agenda is truly, fairly, and effectively implemented.

During the last fifteen years, globalisation has given evidence of its challenges and limits and, in a certain sense, has become a "victim" of its own success. In fact while allowing for a general improvement of living conditions it has created a large number of losers alongside winners. This is reflected in the widening gap of inequality, particularly within emerging and advanced economies. Over the last 15 years, the condition of many people living in poverty or near poverty has deteriorated, as a result of processes that have displaced their livelihoods and thus severely impaired their ability to make a decent living. These processes include environmental degradation, violent conflict, forced migration, rapid fluctuations in the prices of commodities and agricultural products, stranded resources and natural disasters resulting from climate change, as well as cyclical political and economic crises. The loss of benefits like insurance and pensions formally associated with employment in the high- and middle-income world has further magnified the uncertainty and precariousness now faced by the middle class. In our globally interconnected world, people living in poverty are keenly aware from their exposure to mass and social media that their wellbeing is often determined by decisions of leaders and policy makers whom they have little opportunity to influence.

Such an individualistic economic ideology, "an economy of exclusion and inequality"², is anchored on a "belief" in the natural selfishness of human beings and the automatic ability of a free market, unhindered by moral regulations, to generate

¹ Pope Francis, address to the United Nations General Assembly 25th September 2015. The full statement is available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/september/documents/papa-francesco_20150925_onu-visita.html

² Pope Francis, *Evangelium Gaudium*, 53.

increased efficiency and aggregate growth. This ideology describes the future not in terms of uncertainty but in terms of risk based on probability. The consequences of any action may be rationally assessed, and all come down to utility maximisation. We learned through the crisis that, in real life, the future is unknown; it is often shaped by actions based on incomplete or deliberately false information and even irresponsible speculation, which often produce unintended and unexpected consequences. When the consequences of specific decisions and actions are uncertain, reason demands that moral and prudential criteria be included in the regulatory process.³

The lessons of the global financial crisis have not been assimilated, and we are learning all too slowly the lessons of environmental deterioration. Some “circles” maintain that current economics and technology will solve all environmental problems (...). Yet by itself the market cannot guarantee integral human development and social inclusion. At the same time, we have “a sort of “super-development” of a wasteful and consumerist kind which forms an unacceptable contrast with the ongoing situations of dehumanizing deprivation”⁴, while we are all too slow in developing economic institutions and social initiatives which can give the poor regular access to basic resources. As stated in the *Nairobi Azimio* declaration of the XIV UNCTAD Conference “*economic activities should be at the service of persons. Any development and growth strategy should aim at the promotion of every human being and at the primacy of human work.*”(paragraph 9)

The commitment to a more integrated, comprehensive, transformative and sustainable approach to development played a key role in the adoption of 17 goals and targets for policymakers across all the levels of political organization. The 17 goals and multiple targets have clearly demonstrated a level of aspiration and ambition well beyond the Millennium Development Goals.

³ Pope Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Letter, Caritas in Veritate* No. 37

⁴ Pope Francis Encyclical letter *Laudato si*, n.109

The principle of the common good, to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain its fullest meaning, stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people. According to its primary and broadly accepted sense, “the common good is ‘the sum total of all conditions which allows people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily. The resulting rights and obligations are consequently the concern of the entire human race. Every group must take into account the needs and legitimate aspirations of every other group, and even those of the human family as a whole’ ”⁵

The common good should be understood, not as the good of the abstract collectivity, or of the State, nor merely as the mixture of goods of individual members, but rather as the good of every person both as an individual and as a social being in relation to others. “The common good does not exist only on the level of state or nation, however, but at the level of every human group or community.”⁶

Human beings are not necessarily self-centred individuals geared toward maximising their own utility or satisfaction, unmoved by others who they consider only as trading partners. They are persons, each of whom becomes fully her/himself through relationships with other human beings, autonomous but not independent from others.

Through the 2030 Agenda, the international community has chosen solidarity over egoism: solidarity with the excluded of today, solidarity with the poor of tomorrow, solidarity with future generations. The family, the natural and fundamental unit of society, is the primary agent of sustainable development, and therefore the model of communion and solidarity among nations and international institutions. A shared concern for the family and its members is a proven contributor to poverty reduction, better outcomes for children, equality between girls and boys, women and men, as well as improved balance of work-family-rest, and stronger intra- and inter-generational bonds.

⁵ *Gaudium et spes* 26.1.

⁶ Williams, Thomas D., “Global Governance and the Universal Common Good”, in *Alpha Omega*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2010, p. 272–273.

In practical terms, the Holy See views life with dignity as including: “... *religious freedom and education as well as lodging, labor, land, food, water, and health care.*”⁷ Moreover, in the words of Pope Francis, “[w]e cannot call any society healthy when it does not leave real room for family life. We cannot think that a society has a future when it fails to pass laws capable of protecting families and ensuring their basic needs” In the context of family life, the Holy See acknowledges “that women have a special role to play in the family and society and, in specific regard to integral human development per se. This is due to their unique presence in the creation of life as physical and spiritual mothers, who have special, but not exclusive gifts, that include defending, nurturing, and caring for life, from conception until natural death.”⁸

The Holy See believes that religious freedom “*shapes the way we interact socially and personally with our neighbor whose religious views differ from our own*” and interreligious dialogue, permits us to speak to one another, as opposed to taking up arms. Taking into consideration the ongoing atrocities against Christians and other religious minorities, the Holy See maintains that issues relating to religious freedom per se and freedom of conscience as well as inter-religious and intra-religious dialogue must be given priority for the ultimate success of the 2030 Agenda. Indeed, the separate goals in the 2030 Agenda that relate to peace and inclusive societies are of particular importance for the related crisis concerning the increasing numbers of migrants, refugees and displaced persons, who are obviously bringing with them various religious traditions.⁹

Despite the tremendous progress that has been made, we still find, in middle- and low- income countries and even among the poor and marginalized populations in high-income countries, babies being born with HIV, adults needing second and sometimes third-line medications, lack of strong health infrastructures, and intermittent or non-existent access to electricity to assure stability of medicines that

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

require refrigeration. We must all be part of the story, part of the solution to accessible, affordable care for these vulnerable brothers and sisters. If we look toward the third Sustainable Development Goal as a guide we find a call to: attain healthy lives for all at all ages. We must address maternal/child health, epidemics of AIDS, TB, malaria and neglected tropical diseases, hepatitis, water-borne diseases, and other communicable diseases, and reducing non-communicable diseases in order to meet this goal. Thus, we believe that all must be part of the story, including pharmaceutical and diagnostics companies, as we strive to fulfill the moral imperative to increase access to health, product development (diagnostics, vaccines and medicines), affordable pricing, and delivery systems, thus expanding access to pharmaceuticals for all people who need them, but especially children and our poorest and most marginalized brothers and sisters throughout the world.

It would be irresponsible to ignore the situation of mass migratory movements and, in particular, the vulnerability of forced migrants, in a presentation that focuses on the projected achievement of the 2030 agenda. As this audience would be well aware, the SDGs contain a *migration-specific* target (10.7), which calls on countries to "facilitate orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies". Second, there are several *migration-related* targets, including those projected efforts to train and retain health workers in developing countries and other measures to mitigate the "brain drain", to provide scholarships for study abroad, to end human trafficking, to respect labour rights of migrants workers, in particular women, to reduce the costs of transferring remittances, and to provide legal identity for all, including through birth registration.¹⁰ In this context, Pope Francis has joined other religious leaders in appealing for better governance of

¹⁰ *Integrating Migration into the 2030 Agenda for Development*, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, No. 2015/5, December 2015, <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/publications/populationfacts/docs/MigrationPopFacts20155.pdf>

migration and protection of those migrants who desperately need the solidarity of both governments and civil society. He recognizes, however, that such measures can only be achievable under the following condition: “a change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world.”¹¹

In conclusion, dear Friends, Pope Francis urged “the entire international community to persevere on this path, in a spirit of ever more effective solidarity” and “in the hope that it will ensure that special attention is paid to those who are most vulnerable.” As he declared during his November 2015 address, this is a path which seeks to attain “three complex and interdependent goals: lessening the impact of climate change, fighting poverty and ensuring respect for human dignity.” On the other hand, good intentions and solemn commitments are not enough.

The present time invites us to give priority to actions which generate new processes in society, so that we will bear fruit in significant and positive historical events¹². We cannot permit ourselves to postpone “certain agendas” for the future. The future demands of us critical and global decisions in the face of world-wide conflicts which increase the number of the excluded and those in need. The implementation of SDGs represents an opportunity to rediscover how creative and effective multilateral and multi stakeholder activities can be when guided by a common vision and motivated by a moral and pressing imperative.

Without the recognition of certain incontestable natural ethical limits and without the immediate implementation of those pillars of integral human development, the ideal of “saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war” (*Charter of the United Nations, Preamble*), and “promoting social progress and better

¹¹ Pope Francis, *Message for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees*, Vatican City, 5 August 2013.

¹² Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 223

standards of life in larger freedom” (ibid.), risks becoming an unattainable illusion. Good governance and all the political instruments for the maintenance of peace and security for all are indispensable for the successful realization of the 2030 Agenda.

The realization of SDGs call for all stakeholders to exercise an effective, practical and constant will. The wide-ranging, universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development falls on fertile soil in Geneva. The necessary actors, specialist skills, and platforms are all present in Geneva. The SDGs place the interdependence of all development actors, i.e. governments, civil society, the private sector, development banks and, of course, the UN, at the heart of their achievement. The 2030 Agenda aims to avoid issues being dealt with in isolation, in which one UN agency takes charge of the activities towards a given goal. Rather, it encourages multi-sectorial approaches.

Dear Friends,

Looking at the challenges of our times, the SDGs are the common instrument for a shared solution. We as Institutions, as States, as faith based organizations, as individuals have still the opportunity to choose between helping each other achieving these goals, or to miss them failing everyone by himself.