



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the
Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the 28th Special Session Trade and Development Board,
50th Anniversary of the establishment of UNCTAD
Geneva, 17 June 2014

Mr. President Mr. Secretary-General of the United Nations,
Mr. Secretary-General of UNCTAD,

At the outset, the Holy See wishes to warmly thank you and the UNCTAD for organizing this special event on UNCTAD's 50th anniversary. Events such as this provide us an opportunity to reflect on past accomplishments. More importantly, they should also serve as occasions to stimulate our thinking about the future. In this way, inspired by the past, informed by the present, and motivated by the challenges of the future, we can truly make a difference. The Holy See is one of the “founders” of UNCTAD and, since 1964, has been present at all its General Conferences and principal activities.

The Holy See strongly supported the original inspiration of UNCTAD that created a global trading system friendly to the development of poor countries. This system facilitates regional trade and corrects asymmetries between different trade partners, with special concern for trade in raw materials and food. At the same time, it should be said that the critical evaluation of the evolution of the Global Economy conducted by UNCTAD and many of its insights relating to trade and development were quite helpful in the development of the social doctrine of the Church concerning relations with countries, Notwithstanding the conclusion of the Uruguay Round of international trade negotiations in 1994, which moved most of the international trade discussion and agreement to the WTO, UNCTAD has remained the most important think-tank and political advocate of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and other countries with particular needs, and as such it continues to enjoy the deep esteem of the Holy See and continues to be an inspiration for its international positions.

Emerging from the flames of the most destructive war in history, humanity for the first time possessed the power to render itself extinct. The United Nations was therefore created for a very basic reason: peaceful coexistence. Yet the United Nations flourished because it transcended this very basic objective. The United Nations also became an instrument for a better world. Its aspirations were, and are, noble. One objective particularly stands out: “...to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.”

This objective called for a global economic system, which would give to all peoples the opportunity to realize their full human potential. To accomplish such aims, UNCTAD was created in 1964, at a time when a large part of the world's population had shed the bonds of colonialism and attained independence. With this expansion in the community of nations came a stronger voice for what was to become the community of developing nations. From its inception UNCTAD was the strongest multilateral voice available for the community of developing nations, a constant provocation to reform the global economic system so as to ensure that it would truly benefit all of humanity.

UNCTAD, therefore, exists with one simple but quite challenging goal: to make the global economic system work for every person. This is clearly captured in UNCTAD's motto today: "Prosperity for all." This is a short, but engaging statement. Prosperity leads to empowerment. Empowerment leads to opportunity. Opportunity leads to advancement. And this leads to even greater prosperity, which serves to reinforce the virtuous circle. "Prosperity for all" has a particular decisive importance today, especially in the context of a global society that is becoming ever more uneven, and in which, in spite of the economic convergence of developed, emerging and poor countries, inequalities between rich and poor are becoming an unbridgeable abyss.

Mr. President,

My Delegation would like to recall a theme which has been often discussed in UNCTAD: the role that UNCTAD can play in shaping the future. We maintain that what the world needs now, more than ever, is a new culture of fair multilateral relations based on a new culture of cooperation and international brotherhood. This should be the permanent role of UNCTAD, to be an opportunity and a place for a renewed and effective dialogue on development.

I believe that Secretary General Dr. Kituyi has taken important steps in this direction through the creation of the Geneva Dialogues. This important initiative opens a necessary space for high-level discussion and debate on key development-related issues without the formalities of the intergovernmental process. Yet this is not to undermine the heart of UNCTAD which is its intergovernmental machinery. Rather, my Delegation sees this initiative as an important step to inject new life into the intergovernmental machinery by introducing an opportunity to discuss important issues that may not yet be ready for the negotiating table. Through an informal dialogue and constructive engagement, perhaps more progress can be achieved in arriving at a consensus on the key development issues of the day. This new culture affecting diplomacy and multilateral relations can perhaps be one of the major accomplishments of the golden jubilee: it is the way to the future where solidarity promotes the prosperity of the entire human family. Thank you.