



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the Preparatory Committee for the UNCTAD XV
Ministerial Conference
Geneva, February 22nd, 2021

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See would like to renew its sincere thanks to you and the Secretariat for your tireless efforts in elaborating a *zero draft* that reflects the level of ambition needed as we face the unprecedented challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Since this is the first session in which Ms. Isabelle Durant has assumed the role of acting Secretary-General, we would like to express to her our sincere congratulations and the firm conviction that we will be able to elaborate an ambitious outcome document under her leadership.

The different aspects of this unpredictable crisis, its solutions, and any new development that the future may bring, are increasingly interconnected and interdependent. The Family of Nations is called to rethink its path, discover new forms of responsible commitment, build on positive experiences and reject negative ones. Thus, the crisis becomes an opportunity for discernment in how to shape a new integral vision for the future.

The zero-draft text released on December 11th (ZD) appears to be a solid text for negotiating a successful consensus outcome for the XV UNCTAD Ministerial Conference. The necessity to transform the development paradigm should guide our work in the coming months. Huge disparities in income and wealth have cut deep scars across this environment, with the winners and the strongest using their political advantage to reinforce dominant economic positions. Multilateralism, which has, for some time, been struggling against these currents, has entered a state of paralysis just as rising tensions have emerged around trade, currency, and technology issues, further souring international relations. Moreover, alarms are ringing over the multiple stresses facing the global ecosystem, with projections pointing to an ever-bleaker environmental future.

The *zero draft* conveys the profound social and economic concerns that the Covid-19 crisis has exacerbated. It also draws attention to the “fault lines” and the “imperfect and improvised” nature of the approaches used hitherto in the path to development. One of the important factors that has inhibited sustainable development is “the tendency to forget that the vulnerability of some will eventually become the vulnerability of all” (ZD §24). As reflected in the text, the anxiety created by these trends is present at all levels of economic development, but it is alarming for developing countries where long-standing structural and geographical disadvantages have been compounded by new financial and environmental vulnerabilities linked to high levels of external debt and highly volatile capital flows, as well as rising costs from climate shocks. The stress facing many islands and land-locked economies is particularly acute.

Seventy-five years ago, a sense of international solidarity, responsible collective action and sacrifice, and forward-looking local endeavours provided the inspiration and motivation for those

tasked with building a better post-conflict world. The San Francisco Declaration, that established the United Nations, promised multilateral co-operation to solve international problems through collective and harmonious collaboration, grounded in respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples.

Mr. President,

From its inception, UNCTAD has been one of the most vital multilateral voices available for the community of developing nations, providing a constant incentive to reform the global economic system so as to ensure that it would truly benefit all of humanity. UNCTAD, therefore, exists with one simple yet quite challenging goal: to make the global economic system work for every country and for every person. The Covid-19 pandemic has served as a stark reminder that this is indeed an interdependent world. Tackling the common challenges facing humanity requires responsible and forward-looking collective action.

The Holy See considers environmental, development and security agendas as interconnected. Solving one without addressing the others is no longer a feasible prospect. What is urgently needed is a frank assessment of the multilateral crisis with the aim of renewing the principles of multilateralism in light of the numerous challenges we are now facing. The outcome document that we will negotiate and discuss over the next months gives us the unique opportunity to build an effective response to the economic consequences of the Covid-19. Bearing in mind that our focus should not only be on active and targeted macroeconomic measures, but also on a series of remedial policies needed to build an equitable, integral and climate-friendly development trajectory, the Holy See hopes that the result of this process could match the level of the ambition that the international community had at the moment of the institution of this Conference.

Thank you, Mr. President.