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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALL'ECOSOC A NEW YORK

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento pronunciato il 29 giugno scorso a New York all'ECOSOC High Level Segment on Least Developed Countries dal Capo della Delegazione della Santa Sede, Presidente della Pontificia Accademia delle Scienze Sociali, Prof. Mary Ann Glendon, sul tema: "*Resource Mobilization and Enabling Environment for Poverty Eradication in the context of the implementation of the Program of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010*":

• INTERVENTO DELLA PROF. MARY ANN GLENDON

Madam President:

With indications that the least developed countries are in danger of failing to meet established goals aimed at eradication of poverty, the Holy See joins its voice to those that are urgently calling the family of nations to attend to the needs of its most vulnerable members.

My delegation notes with concern that, based on progress to date, most LDCs are unlikely to achieve, for example, the goals of the Brussels Program of Action [BPOA]. Economic growth rates of LDCs have been well below levels needed to start making inroads into poverty reduction, investment flows have not increased significantly, Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows have been inadequate. Moreover, many LDCs find themselves in a post-conflict situation with as many as 80% of the 20 poorest LDCs having emerged from a civil war within the past 15 years.

But, these difficulties and challenges encountered thus far must not be regarded as excuses, but rather as spurs to more intense efforts by the development partners. For as Pope John Paul II has insisted, "The poor cannot wait." No one can deny that the challenge to reverse what often appears to be a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty, especially of LDCs, is formidable.

Sometimes overlooked among the obstacles to progress is the fact that globalization has accelerated the disruption of entire ways of life. As age-old patterns of work and family life have disintegrated, a sense of powerlessness has increased. As new forms of poverty have emerged, the faces of the poor are increasingly

those of women and children. In short, the world is currently going through a chaotic phase, filled with both risk and promise. Those most at risk in the midst of this economic and social turbulence are often the most ignored.

However, the international community has worked out a coordinated, cooperative approach to enabling the least developed countries to develop their own economies and to enter the circle of production and exchange. The elements of that approach have been largely agreed upon: debt relief, fair trade practices, the rule of law, investment in education, primary health care, nutrition, and sanitation.

In this regard, the Holy See takes note of the Brussels Program of Action which is aimed at the eradication of poverty and hunger in the world's 50 least developed countries (LDC) where 700 million of the world's poor are living. The specific commitments envisaged under this Action Program can trigger increasing development aid, promote foreign investment, reduce debt burdens, and open up markets in industrial countries for LDC exports.

Internationally agreed action programs, such as the BPOA, have the potential to offer humankind the key to unlocking the prison of poverty. For the first time in history, we may even be within reach of setting conditions for every girl and boy to develop her or his full human potential. But, the key to the prison gates cannot be turned by one party alone. It will be a scandal and a tragedy if the nations do not join hands to turn that key. Here, the international community should call on the developed countries to take the lead in showing a greater degree of responsibility and solidarity as well as an abandonment of their sole group interests and objectives in the noble interest of the common good. Without a serious commitment of the developed nations to do their share of sacrifice in this process, the LDCs will continue to be trapped in their current difficult situation.

Hence the urgency of this High-Level Segment: How can commitments already made be revitalized? How can progress along a well-charted path be speeded? The Holy See, as a partner with longstanding special concern for the poorest people in the poorest countries, recognizes that a broad range of cooperative economic and political measures are required.

In view of the internationally agreed target of reducing poverty by one half in LDCs by 2015, the Holy See acknowledges that there is now a pressing need for a more effective global commitment to mobilize increased volumes of financial resources for development to address widespread poverty in LDCs. However, for this financial support to be of benefit to LDCs, it must be channeled more effectively into well prepared, productive investments that provide clear benefits to the communities for which it was intended. In parallel, a major effort is needed to build up local capacity to help prepare and implement these investments while improved transparency and accountability procedures need to be put in place to monitor how these resources are being spent. As efforts are made to develop more adequate financial and commercial conditions, the international community should continue to seek for ways and means to enable a fair distribution of profits and to establish conditions that can ensure true human development.

The Holy See wishes to emphasize, however, that any measure to promote authentic and lasting development must be protective of human dignity and culture.

The need to respect human dignity and culture raises the question of the sources of the ethical principles that are necessary to sustain authentic development. While it is widely understood that natural environments are at risk in the current, turbulent age, less attention has been paid to the growing crisis in humanity's fragile social environments. Rapid social and economic changes, and in some places armed conflicts, have taken a severe toll on families and their surrounding social structures. In many poor countries, families have been devastated by HIV/AIDs pandemic and disrupted by migration. Since the family is the primary setting where human beings first acquire the qualities of character and competence that ground healthy economies and polities, development policies must be attentive to their impact on endangered social environments.

Investment in human capital must rank high on the development agenda. Though the least developed countries are materially poor, they are rich when it comes to the potential contained within the human person. The human person is where all dimensions of development come together--development not only as the elimination of poverty but as the liberation of the gifts and talents of every woman and man through better health, education,

and opportunity. The liberation of that potential must entail careful attention to the situations of women and girls, assuring their full and equal access to education and health, as well as to civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Towards these ends, the experience and resources offered by faith-based initiatives as partners in the fields of education, health care and relief should be fully utilized.

Now that the means are possible to defeat mankind's old enemies, hunger and poverty, there is no excuse for failing to press forward. The chief obstacle has been pinpointed by the Secretary General when he said, "While there may be enough resources to combat hunger, the political will to do so is still lacking." What has impeded the mobilization of the necessary will? It is not only the vicious cycle of material poverty in the least developed countries, but a certain poverty of imagination among the more fortunate peoples of the world: a failure of empathy, an inability to recognize the interdependence of all members of the human family, a forgetfulness of our radical dependence upon the earth, the harvest, and the children who represent the human future. In that connection, the Holy See takes this occasion to reaffirm its historic commitments on both fronts: its commitment to providing education, health care, and other basic services to the poorest members of the human family, and its corresponding mission to open the hearts of the privileged.

What is needed, Madam President, is a change of heart, that the international community may be ever bolder, more generous, more creative, more energetic in its struggle to finally end the division of the world into areas of poverty and plenty.

Thank you, Madam President.

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