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Here below the Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the U.N. Economic and Social Council at the 53rd Session of the Commission for Social Development, Agenda Item 3 (a): "Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world" (New York, 10 February 2015):

Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza

Madam Chair,

At the outset, allow me to congratulate Your Excellency and the bureau on your elections. My Delegation looks forward to working with other delegations during this policy cycle to redouble our efforts to assist those living in all forms of poverty around the world.

Madam Chair,

Though economic growth has slowed in recent years, millions continue to be lifted out of poverty, particularly in the developing world. My delegation, however, shares the concern of the Secretary General in his recent report and recognizes that economic growth, which has led to new challenges, has not benefited everyone in society equally. Significant inequalities remain and many of the most vulnerable groups in society have been left behind. Without addressing these inequalities, especially as we transition into the post 2015 development agenda, we risk undermining the impact of economic growth on poverty and on the well-being of society as a whole.

To be sustainable and beneficial for all, social development must be ethical, moral and person-centered. Here again, we echo the Secretary General's report when we emphasize that economic growth is not a sufficient indicator of social development. Rather, we must be attentive to those indicators that give a complete picture of the wellbeing of every individual in society while promoting policies that encourage a truly integral approach to the development of the human person as a whole.

In this regard, for example, it is not enough to have gainful employment. Work must also be dignified and secure. Investments in education, access to basic health-care services, and the creation of social safety nets are primary, not secondary factors to improving a person's quality of life, and ensuring the equitable distribution of wealth and resources in society. By placing the human person at the center of development and encouraging investments and policies that meet real needs, the progress made toward eradicating poverty remains permanent and society more resilient in the face of potential crises.

Madam Chair,

The market economy does not exist to serve itself, but rather to serve the common good of all of society. With this in mind, we must pay particular attention to the welfare of the most vulnerable among us since they are often overlooked in the name of greater productivity, efficiency and general economic growth. Social development cannot be a "one-size-fits-all" approach; thus universal policies and programs must be reinforced by a more targeted approach that addresses the needs of the most vulnerable.

As Pope Francis has reminded us time and time again, "Our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society's most neglected members... [This] means working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and to promote the integral development of the poor, as well as small daily acts of solidarity in meeting the real needs which we encounter."

Madam Chair,

The authentic integral development of the person and the eradication of poverty are achievable only by focusing on the tremendous value of the family to society, where every human being receives his or her primary education and most formative development. The family is society's most natural social safety net, sharing resources for the benefit of the entire family unit and offering intergenerational support. In the family, we learn to love and to contribute without pay and, unlike in the global economy, every individual person has a place.

Madam Chair,

In conclusion, my Delegation believes that we need to embark on a strategic approach towards poverty eradication based on true social justice in order to help reduce the suffering of millions of our brothers and sisters. It is our firm conviction that social development policies must address not only the economic and political needs, but also the spiritual and ethical dimension of each human person. In this manner, every individual in the society can be free from all forms of poverty, both material and spiritual.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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