



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

ON THE OCCASION OF THE THIRD WORLD FORUM OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

[TURIN, 13-16 OCTOBER 2015]

Distinguished Honourable Mr Piero Fassino

Mayor of Turin

I address my cordial greeting to you, to the Authorities and to all those taking part in the Third World Forum of Local Development, being held in Turin from 13 to 16 October. Very opportunely, its aim is to reflect on and discuss the potentialities of local economic development, that promote a different vision of the economy, of development, of the relationship with the earth and between people. May God grant light and inspiration to this meeting, which is very important to implementing the 2030 Agenda, which promotes the protection of the environment and integral human development. I should like to contribute to your endeavour by recalling some ideas I expressed recently to the United Nations General Assembly about the Objectives of Sustainable Development, which represent hope for humanity, on the condition that they are applied in an appropriate way.

The practical implementation of the 2030 Agenda is urgent and indispensable. The decisions adopted by the International Community are important. However, they always contain the temptation to fall into a rhetorical nominalism with a tranquillizing effect on peoples' conscience. Moreover, the multiplicity and complexity of the problems require the employment of technical calculations. However, this presents a twofold danger, either to be limited to the bureaucratic exercise of making exhaustive lists of good resolutions — aims, statistics, objectives and indications, or to believe that just one theoretical and *a priori* solution can answer all the challenges.

Political and economic action is prudent, guided as it is by a perennial concept of justice which always bears in mind that, before and beyond the plans and programmes, there are real women and men, equal to the rulers, who live, struggle and suffer, and who must be protagonists of their

future.

Integral human development and the full exercise of human dignity cannot be imposed. They are built and achieved by each person, by each family, in common with other people and in a just relationship with the spheres in which human socialization is developed — friendship, communities, villages and municipalities, schools, businesses and trade unions, provinces, nations.

In this perspective, therefore, local economic development seems to be the most appropriate answer to the challenges that a globalized economy presents to us but which often have cruel results. The Third Forum intends, rightly, to present and to discuss methods and policies related to the local scene in the global processes of development and to focus on the potential such methods and policies have, and on basic resources, at all levels, including the regional, national and international. I pointed out to the UN that the simplest and most appropriate measure and indicator for implementing the new Agenda for development would be the effective, practical and immediate access of everyone to indispensable material and spiritual goods: suitable housing, fitting and appropriately remunerated work, proper food and drinking water; religious freedom and, more generally, freedom of spirit and education. Now, I will add that the only way to achieve these objectives truly and in a permanent way, is by beginning to work at the local level. In my meetings with popular movements and with Italian cooperatives I recalled and developed these ideas, which can be summarized in two axioms: “small is beautiful”, and “small is effective”.

The recurrent global crises have shown how economic decisions that, in general, seek to promote the progress of all by generating new forms of consumption as well as the on-going increase of profit are unsustainable by the very nature of the global economy. It must also be added that they are immoral in and of themselves, since they leave aside every question pertaining to what is just and what really serves the common good. Instead, public and private political and economic discussions should question themselves on how to integrate ethical criteria in the systems and the decisions. The fundamental focus on the local level, as the Forum of Local Development wishes, seems to be one of the highroads to true ethical discernment and to the creation of economies and businesses that are truly free: free from ideologies, free from political manipulation, and above all free from the law of profit at all costs and from the perpetual expansion of business affairs, in order to be truly at the service of all and to reintegrate the excluded into social life.

Christian social thought in Italy, of figures such as Giuseppe Toniolo, Don Sturzo and others, following the guidelines traced by [Pope Leo XIII](#) in the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, offers an economic analysis that, beginning precisely with the local and territorial spheres, proposes options and directions for the global economy. Much of lay social thought too, starting from different premises, also arrived at similar proposals. This vision of an economy, which goes from the local to the world, has also been developed in other countries by many scholars. I shall limit myself here to recalling Ernst Friedrich Schumacher and his famous work “Small is Beautiful”.

Hon. Mr Mayor, I hope that these brief reflections will be a useful contribution to the debate and to the Forum's future work, in order to strengthen local development and especially to inspire the reform of the great global models. Therefore, I renew my wishes for the successful outcome of your meeting, while I invoke the Divine Blessing upon you, upon the other Authorities and upon the participants in the Forum, as well as upon the respective families and endeavours.

From the Vatican, 10 October 2015

FRANCISCUS

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