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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0776

Lunedì 20.10.2014

Statement of the Holy See to the U.N. in New York at the General Debate of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Second Committee (New York, 8 October 2014)

Here below the Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations at the General Debate of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Second Committee: *Delivering and Implementing a Transformative Post-2015 Developments Agenda*:

Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza

Mr. Chair:

As this is my delegation's first time to address the Second Committee during the current session, allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the bureau for your election. My delegation wishes you all the best!

The Holy See believes that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are apt to deliver and help implement a transformative post-2015 Development Agenda.

The Holy See notes with satisfaction that significant progress has been made in reducing global poverty, child mortality and maternal deaths. But it is also aware that more remains to be done, and that it can only be done if we all work together. As Pope Francis affirmed in his May 2014 address to the Secretary General of the United Nations and the UN System Chief Executives, the future objectives for sustainable development should be formulated "with generosity and courage so that they can have real impact on the structural causes of poverty and hunger".

Mr. Chair,

No development goal is more important for the Holy See than the eradication of extreme poverty. This moral imperative has always underlain the social commitment of the Catholic Church. Thus, the Holy See notes with concern that however encouraging recent progress may have been in reducing global poverty, extreme poverty still remains widespread in many regions of the developing world. More than one billion people, or 15% of the world's population, continue to live on less than \$1.25 a day. To fight the structural causes of extreme poverty,

every economic and political policy and activity must set about providing each person with the minimum wherewithal to live in dignity and freedom from want. Without this vision, economic and political policy and activity would be selfish and mere profiteering, and would not contribute towards attacking the structural causes of extreme poverty.

Within the post-2015 development framework, the Holy See wishes to highlight the importance of the sustainable development goals that address the pressing issues of climate change, rising inequality, productive employment for all, and the promotion of peaceful societies. These realities must be part of any sustainable development framework, especially because they tend to affect more severely people living in extreme poverty. They are also important in an ethical context, since they highlight the global obligations of developed countries toward less developed ones.

The challenges related to *climate change* should inform future development policy to a much greater extent than until today. The world has become a village, a neighborhood. The decisions and behaviors of one have profound consequences for others. Thus a collective response to this phenomenon is essential if we have to succeed, a global action that is based on a culture of solidarity and on conscious individual and communitarian decisions to change lifestyles and practices that provoke the worsening conditions of our planet. The Catholic Church, through its vast network of schools and social institutions throughout the world, is committed to promoting education in environmental responsibility and to fighting both extreme want and a throwaway culture in rich societies. Also, we must not put the blame on poor people and countries who cut trees in order to survive, and who are most vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change mainly caused by the high consumption and high carbon emissions in other countries. Instead, they must be helped to overcome or mitigate such effects.

Rising inequality indicates that certain economic models and policies are not working towards promoting equitable development. Indeed, some data show that the wealth of the world's 67 richest individuals is equivalent to that of the bottom half of the world's population, and that the world's richest individual is worth the same as the 156 million people from the bottom. While recognizing that there are many causes of income inequality, we cannot be indifferent to the structural causes of this exponentially increasing gap of the haves and the have-nots, if we are to defeat extreme poverty and achieve sustainable development. This imbalance results in no small measure from policies and practices which uphold the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation, denying State authorities the right – indeed, the duty – to regulate the blind market forces which, left alone, would only heighten uneven development and work against the common good. Any development model that does not allow all to equitably share prosperity will not be sustainable in the long run.

Moreover, we must address vigorously the challenge of finding *productive employment for all* as something integral to sustainable development. The Holy See has always emphasized the special dignity that gainful employment can provide. Today, we do not need reminding of the consequences of high levels of unemployment in the developing world and its impact on international migration. Within developed countries, too, we need to strengthen our efforts to integrate immigrant families into our societies to avoid the consequences of social alienation and radicalization.

Finally, Mr. Chair, the most serious setbacks to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals have been most alarming in countries ravaged by conflicts. My delegation is convinced that unless *peace and reconciliation* are re-established in those countries or regions, the post-2015 sustainable development goals will never be reached. As Pope Paul VI already affirmed way back in 1967, the new name of development is peace. War destroys; peace builds. With war everything is lost; with peace everything is gained.

In closing, Mr. Chair, let me reiterate the Holy See's assurance that the development of peoples is in the heart of its concerns, particularly the development of those who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases and ignorance; of those who are working for a fairer share in the benefits of civilization and development. My delegation looks forward to working closely with you and with all in helping implement a "Transformative post-2015 Development Agenda".

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[01640-02.01] [Original text: English]
