

Intervention of H.E. Paul Richard Gallagher Secretary for relations with States. United Nations Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda New York, 27 September 2015

Holy See Mission



Distinguished Co-Chairs,

The Holy See wishes to congratulate the International Community for adopting the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Indeed, the “adoption of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* at the World Summit is an important sign of hope”.^[1]

The Holy See appreciates the Agenda’s focus on the eradication of poverty and hunger, based on the centrality of the human person and the related commitment to ensure that no one is excluded. Yesterday Pope Francis reminded us that “economic and social exclusion is a complete denial of human fraternity and a grave offence against human rights and the environment”.^[2]

The 2030 Agenda should be built, he said, “on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman, the poor, the elderly, children, the infirm, the unborn, the unemployed, the abandoned... This common home of all men and women must also be built on the understanding of a certain sacredness of created nature”.^[3]

In this way, the pillars of integral human development: “housing, dignified and properly remunerated employment, adequate food and drinking water; religious freedom and, more generally, spiritual freedom and education – have a common foundation – the right to life and, more generally, what we could call the right to existence of human nature itself”.^[4]

The 2030 Agenda for Development could be effective and practical if it provides immediate access, on the part of all, to essential material goods and respect for one's freedom to attain essential spiritual goods.

That poverty has many forms means that sustainable development can neither be conceived nor measured in mere economic and statistical terms. Various aspects of the 2030 Agenda pertain to human activity as such, and for this reason they entail an ethical dimension with attention to spiritual, moral and religious values,[5] namely those "categories which transcend the language of mathematics and biology, and take us to the heart of what is human".[6]

For our own sake and that of future generations, we need models of development that do not compromise human dignity and the health of our environment. In the words of Pope Francis, "we must avoid every temptation to fall into a declarationist nominalism which would assuage our consciences. We need to ensure that our institutions are truly effective in the struggle against all these scourges".[7]

The number and complexity of the problems require that we possess technical instruments for measuring progress. But there are two risks. On the one hand, we might become content with the merely "bureaucratic exercise of drawing up long lists of good proposals – goals, objectives and statistical indicators." [8]

On the other hand, we might delude ourselves into thinking that "a single theoretical and aprioristic solution will provide an answer to all the challenges." [9] In the end, it must never be forgotten that political and economic undertakings are prudential activities, "guided by a perennial concept of justice and constantly conscious of the fact that, above and beyond our plans and programmes, we are dealing with real men and women who live, struggle and suffer, and are often forced to live in great poverty, deprived of all rights".[10]

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

It is widely recognized that achieving each of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, and the many related targets, is a formidable challenge. We must avoid diverting precious resources from the pursuit of the most fundamental goals. In this regard, the Holy See has already made its reservations clearly known and is on record concerning certain targets as well as expressions.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

In adopting this Agenda, the international community has chosen solidarity over egoism: solidarity with the excluded of today, solidarity with the poor of tomorrow, solidarity with future generations.

The family, the natural and fundamental unit of society, is the primary agent of sustainable development, and therefore the model of communion and solidarity among nations and international institutions. A shared concern for the family and its members is a sure contributor to poverty reduction, better outcomes for children, equality between girls and boys, women and men, as well as improved work-family-rest balance, and stronger intra- and inter-generational bonds. It would do us well not to forget the ample evidence that family-friendly policies – including respect for religion and the right of parents to educate their children – contribute effectively to the achievement of development goals, including the cultivation of peaceful societies.

Solidarity and cooperation are not mere sentiments; for them to be genuine, they must move us to action. Thus our choice must mean the determination to mobilize the resources needed to achieve our commitment. It must mean building capacities in poorer countries at the earliest stages to ensure success. It must mean sharing with the poor countries the technological know-how that can help them emancipate their people from extreme poverty, without placing heavy costs on the developed countries. It must mean, on the part of all, justice, the rule of law, a strong commitment to fight corruption, and a genuine spirit of service for the sake of the common good.

Consequently, as we commit to the task of achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda, we must start with the conviction of “our common origin, our history, our common destiny”.[11] We are a single human family in need of one another, with shared responsibilities and with a common destiny inseparably linked to our planet, our common home for which we all must care.

Distinguished Co-Chairs,

I would like to conclude by paraphrasing a passage from the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council: the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anguish of the people of our time, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of us all. Indeed, nothing genuinely human must ever fail

to raise an echo in our hearts.[12]
Thank you.

[1] Pope Francis, *Address to the United Nations Organization*, New York, 25 September 2015.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] *The Holy See Position Part III Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*, Rio de Janeiro, 13-15 June 2012 (cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, Nos. 36 and 37).

[6] Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, No. 11

[7] Pope Francis, *Address to the United Nations Organization*, New York, 25 September 2015.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, No.1.