



**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Petar Rajič
Apostolic Nuncio, Head of Delegation
of the Holy See
at the High-Level Segment of the
United Nations Climate Change Conference**

Doha, 7 December 2012

Mr President,

The Holy See desires to encourage the entire international community to be resolute in promoting authentic co-operation between politics, science and economics. Such co-operation, as has been shown in other multilateral agreements such as for the ozone layer, can achieve significant outcomes, which makes it simultaneously possible to safeguard creation, to promote integral human development and to care for the common good, in a spirit of responsible solidarity and with profound positive repercussions for present and future generations.

Last month, the 24th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer concluded in Geneva, Switzerland. Many linkages between the ozone layer and climate issues have been mentioned, underlying the urgent need to achieve a more holistic approach to the imminent task of protecting creation, while stronger cooperation between the relevant Multilateral Environment Agreements and their subcommittees and instruments could set new standards for successful cooperation. In such a process it is vital to take the concerns of the poor and vulnerable countries into account and assist them to address the challenges they face.

The longer we delay mitigation actions, the more costly will it be to deal with the impacts of climate change. Acting now would save money for future generations. But action must be sustainable and shall not cause new problems to our future generations. Obviously, the decision which actions are to be taken requires the careful collection of detailed and accurate scientific analysis to help taking decisions which deserve being called “sustainable”. Action must be sustainable and should not cause new problems to our future generations.

Equally important are the methods: For enhancing the efficiency of the procedures to come to agreements, it seems to be essential to redefine the concepts and principles that we have applied until now in the international context, in order to better focus our work on the need of those who suffer most and most urgently need our assistance.

Technical solutions are not sufficient. We are very conscious of the human and social dimensions of this global challenge. Climate change is an issue of justice and equity. We must not forget that it is mainly the poor people in fertile ecosystems both in developed and in developing countries who suffer most and who are least able to defend themselves against the impacts of climate change. Governments risk that millions of humans may be forced to leave their original home area if the world would fail implementing appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures.

Mr. President,

Under this process, a wide variety of considerations has been developed. However, all these considerations converge on a central aspect: the desire for a good ecological health and the need to address the crises that the human family is facing: economic, nutritional, environmental and social, all deeply interlinked. They oblige us to a new and deeper reflection on the meaning of the economy and its purposes, to redesign our way, to establish new guidelines and to find new forms of engagement through creative thinking, in order to renew and rediscover fundamental values as base for a better future.

Civil society and local authorities did not wait for the expected political and legally binding conclusions of our meetings, which take such an incredibly long time. Instead, since many years, individuals and groups have implemented an impressive series of both mitigation and adaptation initiatives, being the two cornerstones of the response to climate change. Wisely, many of these initiatives focus on information and education to shape the sense of responsibility in children and adults towards environmentally sound patterns of development and stewardship of creation.

The Holy See, in the albeit small state of Vatican City, also is making significant efforts to take a lead in environmental protection by promoting and implementing projects to increase the use of renewable energy and thus reducing emissions of CO₂ and its consumption of fossil fuels. This initiative is part of the “green culture characterised by ethical values” that Pope Benedict XVI promoted several years ago.

Environmental protection is inseparably linked with an attentive care for creation, with education and with an ethical review of our life styles. The Holy See is well aware of this link and therefore is actively engaging in providing education in environmental responsibility, which also seeks to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology. Many Catholic educational institutions are engaged in promoting such a model of education, both in schools and in universities, and many Episcopal Conferences, Dioceses, parishes and catholic-inspired NGOs are devoted to advocacy and management of ecological programs.

These efforts focus on reflection about our lifestyles: talking about emission reductions is useless if we are not ready to change our current dominant models of consumption and production that are often unsustainable from the point of view of social, environmental, economic and moral analysis. Furthermore, climate change faces us with changes that will lead to a new world order. We will only be successful in addressing these challenges, if this new world order is based on trust and confidence to facilitate effective international co-operation on all levels and taking decisions that accord with human dignity, if this new world order is focusing on education of the young to encourage them avoiding selfish attitudes

towards consumption but feeling committed to protect their home planet. Without this, no success is achievable.

This creation is entrusted to everyone, and it is our first responsibility, even a moral imperative, to safeguard this creation – soil, water and air. The degradation of nature is a mirror of the culture that shapes human coexistence: the way humanity treats the environment influences the way it treats itself. Therefore, in his recent encyclical *Caritas in veritate* and in the *World Day of Peace Message 2010* Pope Benedict XVI addressed to all those involved in the environmental sector an inescapable question: how can we hope that future generations respect the natural environment when our educational systems and laws do not help them to respect themselves?

Mr President,

Man is the custodian of creation – and it will be us here in this body that the world will hold responsible whether we will or will not achieve effective protection of creation as the regards the questions at stake. Environment and climate change entail a shared responsibility toward all humanity, especially the poor and future generations.

On this base, the Holy See hopes that this process can speedily agree on substantive conclusions and continues to give its full cooperation.

Thank you, Mr President.