



HOLY SEE
Statement by H.E. Archbishop CELESTINO MIGLIORE
Head of the Delegation

High-Level Segment of the United Nations Climate Change Conference
COP19/CMP9
Warsaw, 21 November 2013

Mr President,

This Conference is an important opportunity for the international community to show its real political will to give a responsible, credible and supportive response to the worrying and complex phenomenon of climate change.

The Climate Change 2013 Report on the Physical Science Basis presents a scientific consensus: global warming is unequivocal, it is extremely likely that human action has influenced the observed warming and further warming and changes in all components of the climate system will continue in the future.

This scientific evidence underlines once more the strong risks and socio-economic costs of inaction, as well as the ethical imperative to act, since inaction will affect most of all the poorest sectors of society, which are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Human activity, however, can influence climate change not only negatively, but also in a positive way, for the benefit of present and future generations: there are plenty of experiences all over the world which show the possibility of taking advantage of so-called win-win opportunities, where climate change adaptation and mitigation are achieved together with poverty eradication and sustainable development enhancement.

As Pope Francis likes to say: “Poverty calls us to sow hope!”

In this perspective, two points are to be underlined.

First: ambitious and serious action is needed. The longer we wait, the higher the level of ambition will have to be.

Second: if we want to address climate change effectively, we must all act together, taking into account the need to implement a profound and far-sighted review of the current model of development, so as to correct its dysfunctions and deviations. This is required not only because of the earth's state of ecological health or because of environmental and energy emergencies, but also because of the scandal of hunger and extreme poverty.

This calls for serious reflection. A reflection which must reassert the role that economic development plays in improving measures of environmental well-being. Moreover, it requires taking stock of the moral and cultural crisis, the symptoms of which are now evident all over the world. It is urgent, then, to find a way of combining technical know-how with a solid ethical approach based on human dignity.

Important elements for this ethical direction include respect for the dignity of each human person, the principles of prudence and precaution, the promotion of the common good, attention and care for the poor and future generations, the modification of lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production, often unsustainable in terms of economic, social and environmental aspects, the promotion of an authentic spirit of solidarity which can guarantee the effectiveness of every cooperative undertaking. Issues affecting the human dignity of individuals and peoples cannot be reduced to technical problems. Climate change is an issue of justice and equity.

Mr President,

COP-19 is a significant step in the long-standing process aimed at adopting new common binding measures and adequate budgets for effective mitigation and adaptation programmes to address the increasing threat of climate change to humanity.

The deadline for delivering a global, legally binding agreement was postponed several times – we now talk about 2015. There is still a long and complex way to go in a relatively short time. Building on the centrality of the human person, social justice and equity, we will be able to develop adequate policies at all levels, aimed at identifying ambitious sustainable actions that do not cause new problems for future generations.

Equity should be the cornerstone of any new agreement. Although frequently referred to, the concept of equity in the context of climate change is still poorly defined. Equity means different things to different people, and as a result negotiating groups often talk past each other despite using the same word. Arguments such as 'historic responsibility' at times prevail over the real capability of each State to act in order to overcome the challenge, and also over the discourse on better and more effective cooperation between developed and developing countries.

How can we then translate equity into practical measures?

We have good examples which can guide us, for instance, the implementation of the successful ozone regime. This process took into account the concerns and economic

constraints of developing countries, differentiated standards for developed and developing country parties, additional financial assistance to developing country to enable compliance; technology transfer. A similar equitable approach to climate action seems desirable, since only an agreement based on equitable principles will help us effectively address the challenge of climate change.

Mr President,

Technical solutions are necessary, but not sufficient.

A new agreement should also take into consideration the aspects of information and education, with the aim of promoting a sense of responsibility in children and adults towards the stewardship of creation and the environmentally sound patterns of development, as well as towards the safeguarding of the moral conditions for an authentic human ecology. Caring for creation and education are inseparably linked with an ethical approach to the economy and sustainable development. How can we hope that future generations will respect the natural environment if our educational and social systems as well as our laws do not help them to respect themselves or others?

Talking about emission reductions is useless if we are not ready to change our lifestyle and our current dominant models of consumption and production that are often unsustainable in their social, environmental, economic and moral aspects.

Mr President,

Climate change entails a shared responsibility toward the entire human family, especially the poor and future generations.

The hope of the Holy See is that the decisions to be taken in Warsaw will be guided by an ethical imperative to act.

Thank you, Mr President.