

**Statement of His Eminence Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson
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Head of the Delegation of the Holy See**

**Summit of Heads of State and Government
on the Millennium Development Goals**

New York, 20 September 2010

Mr. President,

I have the honour to convey the cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Heads of State and Government assembled here during these days to work together towards a world free of the plague of extreme poverty and to ensure that all children, women and men in every country of the world have the conditions necessary to live their lives in freedom and dignity.

His Holiness, as a sign of the universality of the message of the Catholic Church, desires to collaborate with men and women from all over the world, both developed and developing countries, both Christian and non-Christian cultures. So it was that Pope Benedict XVI appointed me, a son of Africa and of the Church, to be his assistant for the questions concerning justice and peace among peoples. In so doing, he affirms that Christianity forms part of the African culture, rich in fundamental human values that contribute in a specific way to a “human” management of global affairs, notwithstanding material setbacks suffered in the 20th and early 21st centuries.

In the year 2000, with the unanimous endorsement of the Millennium Declaration, all Heads of State at the United Nations acknowledged that the international struggle against poverty could not be limited to the management of the great economic variables, such as finances and foreign debts, commerce and development aid. Rather, the Family of Nations appreciated the more specifically “human” aspects of development, such as eradicating hunger, promoting education, providing health care and social services, ensuring equal opportunities for work, and advocating responsible stewardship of the environment.

Efforts to reach the Millennium Goals have involved the entire international community at global, regional and national levels, in spite of armed conflicts, financial crises, commercial differences, natural catastrophes, and a myriad of other human and social problems. Progress has been made in various ways towards halving the number of people living under the absolute poverty line, particularly in the area of primary education and equal educational opportunities for men and women. Encouraging signs are also noted in the area of access to basic sanitation and to safe drinking water.

However, achievements are mainly concentrated in the so-called “emerging” economies, which have succeeded in reaching an extraordinary degree of development in the past decade. Unfortunately, less than half of the countries suffering from child malnutrition will be able to eradicate this affliction before 2015. Despite rapid economic growth and improvement of the social indicators in many countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, this region as a whole continues to face the greatest number of problems in the struggle against poverty. As if that were not enough, even in middle and high-income countries, there are important concentrations of poverty.

Therefore, much still needs to be done to maintain and strengthen political mobilization, through continued economic and financial solidarity, in order to guarantee the availability of

resources. In this regard, the Holy See emphasizes the importance of strengthening a global partnership for development which is a necessary condition for the achievement of all other goals, and supports the full and integral compliance of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration of Financing for Development. Furthermore, in addition to providing the financial means to redress the problems associated with the international financial system, hard work is still needed to eradicate the debts of poor countries and to prevent the recurrence of certain situations of international usury that have marked the last decades of the 20th century. We need constant low-cost cash flows for the less developed countries, specifically destined to create structures for sustainable local productivity and stable high-level employment. Developed countries and emerging economies should also generously keep their markets open, without excessive demands for trade reciprocity, in order to help poor countries grow towards the economic independence necessary to promote their socio-economic development. A constant sharing of knowledge in the areas of science and technology has to be offered to poorer countries so that they can generate, on a local level, the capacities necessary to solve effectively, by themselves, their health-care problems and their need to diversify agricultural and industrial production.

Notwithstanding the international financial crisis, an essential part of a deeper and lasting solution is the reinforcement of ODA (Official Development Assistance) pledges, so that the commitment to allocate 0.7% of the GDP to this kind of aid may be quickly applied, while ensuring that these sums do in fact reach the poorest countries. Promotion of this effort will require a renewed understanding that will enable us to expand our vision from the donor/recipient paradigm to see each other for who we are: brothers and sisters, with equal dignity, and opportunity to access the same markets and networks.

The campaign for development carried out by international agencies has revealed that success is not so much economic assistance but rather creativity and resourcefulness, commitment and countless sacrifices of “small actors”. For example, there are local governments and municipal authorities, the myriad of subjects who make up civil society — large and small NGOs, international and national trade unions, cooperatives, consumer associations, advocacy groups— as well as a plethora of "Faith-based Organizations." Such local ownership constitutes a new phenomenon, which has succeeded, almost spontaneously, in combining the most modern technology with so-called "*appropriate*" and "*intermediate technology*" thus giving life to the expression "*small is beautiful*." Indeed, this reality was predicted many years ago by economists such as Ernest Friedrich Schumacher, and strongly inspired by the Encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII and *Mater et Magister* of John XXIII (cf. also Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 72).

The struggle for development has therefore stressed the importance of *actively mobilizing all subjects of civil society*; and in this way, has proven to be, beyond a doubt, the *centrality of the human person, as the subject primarily responsible for development* (*Caritas in Veritate*, no. 47). Real men and women who have formed partnership and alliances to bring the north and the south together are showing that it is possible to unite the immense possibilities of intelligence and human will in the service of *integral human development*. There is a vast amount of experience, from Africa and from other poor regions, to demonstrate that positive change is possible. This involvement, at the ground level, where local communities become key actors in their own development, is something indispensable for the true effectiveness of international aid and for better international financial and commercial structures, which nevertheless continue to be necessary.

Mr. President,

Although, local civil societies seem increasingly conscious of their role as actors in their own development, unfortunately, most of the obstacles encountered are imputable to bad

governance and irresponsible State conduct on regional and international levels. Therefore, to overcome definitively the obstacles that impede development, the positive experiences of civil society must become values that guide political action.

Countless innocent victims, whole populations, have been left in the wake of the international financial crisis. The unethical and irresponsible conduct of large private financial operators, together with the lack of foresight and control by Governments and the international community, have all played a role. Excessive nationalism and corporate self-interest as well as old and new ideologies, fomenting wars and conflicts, are all obstacles to development. Illicit trafficking of persons, drugs and precious raw materials linked to the situation of war and extreme poverty, on the one hand, and the lack of scruples of certain economic and social contractors from more developed regions, on the other hand, continue to be serious impediments to development. The reality of tax evasion, money laundering and the so-called “tax havens” set up to drain the coffers of Governments in poor countries by diverting limited resources away from development, remains a problem. The financial crisis, which has finally given rise to protectionist trade, has become yet another obstacle to the development of poor countries.

All Governments, both of developed and developing countries, must accept their responsibility to fight corruption against reckless and sometimes immoral behaviour in the areas of business and finances, as well as irresponsibility and tax evasion, in order to guarantee the “rule of law” and to promote the human aspects of development such as education, job security and basic health care for all. Likewise, all countries, especially richer or more powerful ones, must act in accordance with responsible international solidarity. Today more than ever, it is difficult for national measures not to have international consequences that may at times weigh heavily on countries that are distant and unknown to the immediate beneficiaries of such measures. In addition, within their own territories, Governments —the donors as well as the recipients— should not interfere with or hinder the particular character and autonomy of religious and civil organizations involved in the areas described above. Rather, they should respectfully encourage such organizations as well as promote and financially support them as much as possible. The generosity and commitment of religious and civil organizations should inspire governments and international organizations to make proportional efforts.

For all these reasons, population policies which violate human dignity do not help the MDGs to attain their sublime objectives; still less do they alleviate poverty. I know the poverty of deprivation and exclusion, as an African. I have encountered really poor and destitute people in my life and ministry as a religious leader, and I would like to ask the International Community, especially the developed countries, not to underestimate the resourcefulness of the poor, and not to find them burdensome. Ensure to poor countries the effective mainframe of Goal 8, and they will assume the shared responsibility and national ownership of achieving the other goals. MDGs should be used to fight poverty and not to eliminate the poor!

The inherent and equal dignity, the individuality, and the transcendence of each human being must be the foundation of each and every policy on development. *Morally responsible openness to life represents a rich social and economic resource (Caritas in Veritate, 44)*. Reverence for human life, from conception until natural death, and respect for the capacity of men and women to live upstanding moral lives, affirms their personal transcendence, even if they live in poverty. Controlling one’s passions and overcoming hedonistic impulses, constitute the starting point for building a harmonious society. Such respect is also the necessary and essential condition for sustainable economic development and integral human development. Hence, the Holy See reaffirms its conviction that great benefits will accrue to all men and women now living in poverty, only if the

MDGs are understood and pursued in harmony with objective moral standards and human nature (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, nos. 44, 68-70 and 75).

In this regard, on the much debated issue of maternal health, the Holy See, respectfully and fervently invites the Countries participating in this HLM, to provide quality resources for the health care needs of mothers and their babies, including the unborn. Moreover, repeated references in the Outcome Document to “sexual and reproductive health” and “family planning” raise deep concerns. These are controversial terms, often interpreted as including access to abortion and methods of family planning that are not in accordance with the natural law, known by right reason.

Mr. President,

In his latest Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI explained that the vision of development as a vocation brings with it the *central place of charity within that development*. Indeed, the causes of underdevelopment are not primarily of the material order. In the pursuit of development, in a globalizing world, only “the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism...will enable modern man to find himself anew” (*Populorum Progressio*, no. 51). While reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and women, and of creating the means to give some stability to their civic coexistence, it cannot establish fraternity; since authentic fraternity originates in a transcendent vocation from God (cf. *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 19).

The Family of Nations has committed itself to fighting material poverty. This is a key and noble goal to pursue; but in this effort let us never forget that material poverty has partners—relational, emotional, and spiritual poverty. The human person must be at the centre of concern in our quest for development. If everyone’s political, religious and economic rights and freedoms are respected, we will shift the paradigm from merely trying to manage poverty, to creating wealth; from viewing the person as a burden, to seeing the person as part of the solution. The fundamental mission of the Holy See is above all spiritual, and this mission encompasses solicitude for all people and all of creation. For this reason, the Holy See feels obliged to be present in the life of the nations and carry out its commitment, in partnership with the international community and the civil society, to promote justice and solidarity among peoples. It is with this conviction that the Holy See desires to collaborate with this Summit in the quest of an era of peace, social justice and authentic human integral development.

Thank you, Mr. President.