

Holy See Calls For Human Centered Development

Says Poor Need Education, Not Population Control

VATICAN CITY, APRIL 2, 2009 (Zenit.org).- The Holy See is calling for a human centered approach to achieving the international millennium goals, underling the issues of stabilizing the population and the need to foster development.

Archbishop Celestino Migliore, permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, affirmed this Wednesday to a commission on population and development of the U.N. Economic and Social Council.

He observed that in the session's preparatory documents "one cannot help but get the impression that populations are seen as the hindrance to greater social and economic development rather than vital contributors to the success of the Millennium Development Goals and greater sustainable development."

The prelate noted the impression given by the literature, that the "very institution" that launched the development goals 15 years ago "is giving priority to population control and getting the poor to accept these arrangements rather than primarily focusing upon its commitments to addressing education, basic health care, access to water, sanitation and employment."

In the span of 15 years, the archbishop observed, though "many demographic experts and politicians warned that an increasing world population would create an overwhelming burden" with "dire possible consequences," what has actually happened is that population growth has begun to slow and "food production continues to rise to the point where it is capable of supporting a larger global population."

"It is almost ironic," he noted, "that environmental destruction is perpetrated primarily by States with lower growth rates and that developed countries are supporting population growth at home while simultaneously working to reduce it in developing countries."

The prelate pointed out that "the increased birth rates in Africa over the last decades have been identified by experts as lowering the elderly dependency ratio and presenting the population with a plentiful workforce capable of providing the continent with an unprecedented advantage in economic terms over regions whose aging populations show growing economic challenges."

In order to take advantage of this opportunity, he stated, "for Africa and ultimately for the whole world, greater commitment must be made to provide economic assistance and investment in human capital and infrastructure to support economic growth."

He added, "Consequently, additional funding programs which focus upon lowering population growth rather than fostering an environment for development will slow, not expedite, the achievement of the [millennium goals]."

Archbishop Migliore stated: "The Holy See continues to believe that the proper focus for addressing global development should primarily be on programs and values which support personal and social development.

"Access to education, economic opportunity, political stability, basic health care and support for the family must remain the basis for achieving the [millennium goals]. These priorities throughout history have provided the platform for economic and social growth and accompanying increase in responsible parenthood."

He affirmed the Holy See's commitment to "continue to serve at the front-line for addressing greater global poverty, human rights and development."

"Through its continued presence and emphasis on providing quality and affordable education, health care, access to food and respect for all human rights, the Holy See and its various organizations show that care for the poor, along with overall poverty reduction, serves as a model for a human centered approach to development," he added.

The archbishop concluded by expressing the hope that all international organizations will direct public efforts toward "the human centered approach" of achieving the goals.

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