

Holy See Backs New Plan for Least Developed Countries

Calls UN to Reflect on Integral Approach

ISTANBUL, Turkey, MAY 23, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The so-called Least Developed Countries are not making sufficient progress, and the Holy See is backing a U.N. call for a new approach to the challenges of their development.

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Holy See's permanent representative to the U.N. offices in Geneva, offered a Church perspective to the discussion through an intervention at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV). The conference was held May 9-13 in Istanbul.

The list of LDCs was established with 25 countries in 1971, a number that has since grown to 48. The LDCs are not only characterized by widespread poverty, but also have structural weaknesses in economic, institutional and human resources.

Noting that continued growth in many of these countries has "not translated into an improved situation for the people," Archbishop Tomasi focused his address on three points, each based on the concept of "integral human development."

The 70-year-old Italian prelate clarified this concept, rooted in Paul VI's 1967 encyclical on progress. Essentially, the Pope there emphasized that development cannot be limited to economic growth, but must "promote the good of every man and of the whole man." This teaching has been echoed in subsequent magisterial statements on social doctrine, including Benedict XVI's "Caritas in Veritate."

Pillars

Archbishop Tomasi observed that "a comprehensive and inclusive framework for international development is essential if any enduring results are to be achieved."

He then noted the "pillars for such framework" elucidated in Catholic social teaching: respect for human dignity; protection of human rights; care of creation; participation in community, subsidiarity and solidarity; along with education; natural resource exploitation; agriculture; manufacturing; trade; financial services; infrastructure and technology.

These pillars must "serve as a guide in our efforts to promote and sustain an approach to development that is integral and authentically human," the prelate stated.

He then looked at the kind of growth necessary for integral human development, stating that it "must include not just material growth but also spiritual growth."

He said that quantifiable and economic criteria such as gross domestic product or stock market growth fail to capture "the full measure of what it means to be human."

Growth that is promoting integral human development is "evaluated by how well it promotes sustainable development and communities, creates decent jobs, alleviates people's poverty and protects the environment," he said.

For LDCs, Archbishop Tomasi added, key elements in this model are agriculture and job creation.

Limited government

Finally, the prelate considered the role of the state in promoting integral human development.

"The teaching of our tradition, when it comes to the responsibility of governments to enact the legal framework and rules so that financial and commercial activities fulfill their social purpose and function smoothly, has consistently asserted a positive role for a limited government, that is neither libertarian or collectivist," he explained.

The prelate went on to consider government role in the economy. And he affirmed that the "'developmental state' plays a unique and key role in the development of a country and with other regional and international authorities is expected to coordinate appropriate and constructive plans."

He also looked at the role of corporations and private finance and development institutions.

There is "no easy formula for success," the archbishop acknowledged in concluding, "but the promise of solidarity can be a foundation for the renewal of commitment by those who have wrestled with this challenge for decades and a guidepost for the new actors in this space."

"The future well being of the LDCs depends to a great extent upon the spirit of gratuitousness that motivates our common efforts," he stated. "Working together in a coordinated and cooperative fashion the institutions and actors from all sectors can and must support the efforts of all LDCs to achieve their goals as members of the one human family."

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