



HOLY SEE

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio,
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations**

**Before the high level segment of the thirteenth session of the
Commission on Sustainable Development:
Turning Political Commitments Into Action**

New York, 20 April 2005

Mr Chairman,

First of all, my congratulations on what has been achieved over the last two years, by both you and your predecessor, Mr Barge Brende, Chair of the 12th session of the CSD.

The 13th session of the CSD is intended to launch a decade of implementation, so as to give greater effect to the objectives of the great developmental and anti-poverty conferences of recent times. This meeting therefore assumes a particular importance, since much of the credibility and effectiveness of the CSD's new shape depends upon success here. For this reason the Holy See associates itself with those who intend to confer upon the CSD a central role in the process of promoting sustainable development.

The purpose of the 13th session of the CSD is to identify policy options and practical measures to expedite the implementation of the MDGs and the Johannesburg targets in three specific areas during 2004 and 2005, that is, water, sanitation and human settlements. There is, therefore, a strong need to arrive at forward looking and action oriented decisions in these three areas which have profound repercussions on the quality of life of everyone.

This debate has thrown light upon these three themes which are so closely related one to the other, and which should be part and parcel of strategies to promote sustainable development and the struggle against poverty. There is in fact a clear link between access to water, sanitation and human settlements on the one hand, and, on the other, human health, the eradication of poverty, the promotion of economic growth, environmental protection and the adoption of sustainable patterns of consumption and production. Thanks also to the last two sessions of the CSD, the international community is now more aware of the need to adopt a multisectoral and multidisciplinary vision properly to confront the inherent difficulties connected to water, sanitation and human settlements.

During this debate, focus has rightly been placed on the need to identify the correct balance between public and private sector solutions in order to achieve the objectives in view.

However, it has become equally clear that a variety of solutions will be required, according to the socio-economic and cultural contexts, and based upon the principle of subsidiarity. Guaranteeing both equal access and adequate amounts of water, sanitation and human settlements will actually require the direct involvement of local populations in decision-making processes, with a view to finding solutions which by their very

nature are local. Thus each part of each society will be empowered to look after its own affairs, while learning to respect and assist others requiring assistance to do so.

According to the principle of subsidiarity, a community of a higher order should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower order, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good.

It is clear that this principle may be applied to specific solutions to specific problems associated with the delivery of water, sanitation and human settlements. Such problems are characterized by a close connection with the land, both physically and socially, calling for greater responsibility on the part of the providers and the users of goods and services associated with water, sanitation and human settlements, whether in a rural or urban setting.

Such a responsibility also demands a greater awareness of the complexity of the use of those goods and services, and therefore requires education and formation locally, which will concentrate on the need to redirect lifestyles and patterns of production and consumption towards greater long term sustainability, with a view to equity, both among users of this generation, and between those of today and those of future generations.

Moreover, the application of the principle of subsidiarity will permit the better realisation of one of the keys to sustainable development, as recognised by the first principle of the Rio Declaration: the centrality of the human person. The principle of subsidiarity must not be seen just as a matrix for greater participation in decision-making, but also as an instrument in the reconstruction of solidarity and of the social fabric, to bring together the people who make up a given community.

In the context of the CSD, the idea of solidarity leaves its typically limited sphere to take on a more international character. As it heads in that direction, the CSD must be capable of demonstrating a particular care for those with less ability and proportionately greater difficulty in gaining access to safe drinking water, sanitation and adequate housing. Only from that special care will it be possible to evaluate the success of the CSD's new working structure, and whether this first policy session has been a success.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.