



**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Gabriele Caccia,
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations,
at the 2020 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
New York, 6-17 July 2020**

Madam President,

The Holy See welcomes the action-oriented and focused approach of this year's High-Level Political Forum, in line with its overarching theme "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development".

Five years ago, the United Nations recognized that "eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development".¹ Much laudable work has been done and noteworthy progress made. At the same time, we must acknowledge that without far greater efforts, poverty will remain a crushing daily reality of hundreds of millions of men, women and children across the globe. As the Secretary-General notes in his report, progress has slowed and – more alarmingly – poverty, including extreme poverty, has risen in parts of the world.² Equally alarming figures have been published by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Food Programme on the rising number suffering from acute hunger.

The unprecedented effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the severe disruption to societies and economies, and the devastating impact on the livelihood of people,³ has aggravated the situation. It has also brought to the fore the inescapable fact that poverty is not merely about the lack of money to survive from day to day, but rather the absence of economic and social justice, of peace, of respect for human dignity.⁴ And while recent years have seen increasing attention being given to emerging threats to food security and nutrition, the pandemic has caused an explosion in the number of men, women and children edging closer to the brink of starvation.⁵

¹ *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (A/RES/70/1), preamble.

² Cf. Report of the Secretary-General, *Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*, E/2020/59, n. 13.

³ Cf. United Nations General Assembly resolution N. 74/270. Global solidarity to fight the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), preamble.

⁴ Cf. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, n. 449: "Poverty poses a dramatic problem of justice; in its various forms and with its various effects, it is characterized by an unequal growth that does not recognize the "equal right of all people to take their seat 'at the table of the common banquet'".

⁵ Cf. Statement of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme to the UN Security Council, 21 April 2020.

As has been stressed throughout this HLPF, the consequences of the pandemic have made reaching the sustainable development goals far more challenging. Without a new approach to the new situation the international community will not reach its goals.

We must first renew our commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism. The “international community must acknowledge that as one human family, called to live in a spirit of human fraternity in defense of and upholding human dignity and life, we will either stand together or fall divided.”⁶ To stand together, we must find “new and innovative consensus-based solutions that are not divisive, politicized or partial, but that truly seek the common good and the integral human development of all”.⁷

Second, we must recognize that just as we needed new strategies and priorities to fight the pandemic, so new priorities are needed to eradicate poverty. If only a portion of the enormous sums being devoted to military expenditures and modernizing nuclear programs were reallocated to caring for the sick, the poor, the marginalized, and victims of conflict⁸ it would make an enormous difference not just in their lives and in the eradication of poverty, but also in the promotion of peace.

Finally, to make progress towards truly integral development of individuals and communities each and every one of us needs to make changes in our own lives. Virtues such as temperance, moderation, abstinence, self-control and solidarity are required, as they “summon us to a more simple and sober life, and unfailing concern for the needs of those around us”.⁹ Such fraternal solidarity, seeking the common good and avoiding individualism and egocentrism, must also be part of our global plans for a development based on human dignity.

Thank you, Madam President.

⁶ Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Statement at the virtual ceremony to mark the commemoration of the signing of the Charter of the United Nations, 26 June 2020.

⁷ Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Statement at the (virtual) High-Level Event on Financing for Development in the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond, 28 May 2020.

⁸ Cf. Cardinal Peter Turkson, Intervention at the press conference entitled “Preparing the future, building peace in the time of Covid-19”, 7 July 2020.

⁹ Pope Francis, Message for World Food Day, 2019.