



HOLY SEE

**Intervention of the Head of the Holy See Delegation
His Eminence Odilo Pedro Cardinal Scherer
Special Envoy of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the
United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
Rio de Janeiro, 22 June 2012**

Madame President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

My delegation warmly thanks the Government of Brazil for hosting this important Conference on sustainable development, expresses gratitude to the people of Brazil for their warm hospitality, and is pleased to participate in this timely gathering of representatives of the international community meeting at this significant juncture in human history.

Now is the opportune time to address the many threats to the human family and its earthly home posed by the persisting injustice of hunger, poverty and underdevelopment which continue to plague our societies. It is the firm hope of the Holy See that this opportunity may provide the occasion at last to set aside the hermeneutic of suspicion underpinning partisan self-interest and protectionism in favour of a true solidarity between us, especially with the poor. This is the time to commit ourselves to a more just distribution of the abundant goods of this world and to the pursuit of a more integral development which corresponds to the dignity of every human being.

For the Holy See, this requires above all maintaining the proper relation of the means to its end. Standing at the centre of the created world is the human person – and, therefore, also at the centre of sustainable development, as affirmed by the First Rio Principle. Each individual

human life, from conception until natural death, is of equal value and dignity.

Any new model of development, such as the "green economy," must be anchored in and permeated by those principles which are the basis for the effective promotion of human dignity, namely: responsibility, even when changes must be made to patterns of production and consumption; promoting and sharing in the common good; access to primary goods including such essential and fundamental goods as nutrition, health, education, security and peace; solidarity of a universal scope, capable of recognising the unity of the human family; protection of creation linked to inter-generational equity; the universal destination of goods and the fruits of human enterprise; and the accompanying principle of subsidiarity, which permits public authorities at all levels to operate in an efficacious manner for the uplifting of each and every person and community. This is all the more marked in international relations where application of these principles between and within states favours an appropriate transfer of technology, the promotion of a global commercial system that is inclusive and fair, as well as respect for obligations in aid-for-development and the determination of new and innovative financial instruments which place human dignity, the common good, and the safeguarding of the environment at the centre of economic activity. The unique and fundamental role of the family – which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares the fundamental group-unit of society – deserves special mention here because education and development begins in the family, where all these principles are transmitted to and assimilated by future generations so that their members assume their proper responsibility in society.

The right to water, the right to food, the right to health and the right to education are intrinsically linked to the right to life and to the right to development. Therefore, we must be bold in affirming them, and equally resolved to safeguard the evident reality that these rights are at the service of the human person. The risk of obscuring this correct relationship seems particularly to be the case in the right to health, where the promotion of a conception of health can be observed that profoundly menaces the dignity of the human person. Imposing death upon the most vulnerable human lives – namely, those in the safest sanctuary of their mothers' wombs –

cannot conceivably be brought under the nomenclature of health-care or simply health. This performs no true service to authentic human development or its true appreciation; indeed it constitutes the greatest violation of human dignity and unjustifiable disservice because development, at all stages of life, is at the service of human life.

Madame President,

The ongoing economic and financial crisis has risked undermining the great progress made in recent decades in technological and scientific development. Engaging such problems honestly and courageously will challenge the international community to a renewed and deepened reflection on the meaning of the economy and its purposes, as well as a renewal of models of development which will not allow the 'why' of development to be overwhelmed by the urgent 'how' of technological solutions. This examination must include not merely the economic or ecological state of health of the planet, but must also require taking stock of the moral and cultural crisis, the symptoms of which are now evident in all parts of the world. This is undoubtedly a complex challenge to confront, but the Holy See stresses the importance of moving from a merely technological model of development to an integrally human model which takes as its point of departure the dignity and worth of each and every person. Each individual member of society is called to adopt a vocational attitude which freely assumes responsibility, in genuine solidarity with one another and all of creation.

Madame President,

In conclusion, Madame President, it is people who are charged with stewardship over nature; but as with everything human, this stewardship necessarily possesses an ethical dimension. In the discharge of this right and duty, a just solidarity with our fellow human beings is always implicit, including those yet to be born. This requires of us a duty towards future generations who will inherit the consequences of our decisions. In this regard, this Conference provides an opportunity for governments to come together to help chart a course for advancing development for all people especially those who are most in need.

Once again, Madame President, we express our gratitude for the leadership of Brazil in hosting this Conference, and sincerely hope that this will help promote the future that together we all need.

Thank you.