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Statement By Archbishop Caccia At UNGA 79 – Third Committee Agenda Item 26 (A, B): Social Development

By **H. E. Archbishop Gabriele Caccia**

Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations

New York, 4 October 2024

Mr. Chair,

I would like to congratulate you and the Bureau on your election. My Delegation looks forward to engaging constructively in the work of the Committee during this session.

Social development, which is a fundamental pillar of integral human development, cannot be achieved without inclusion. However, there is a discrepancy between the discourse on inclusion and the spreading of a “throwaway culture” that dehumanizes individuals by reducing them to their perceived “usefulness,” a perspective that can contribute to the perpetuation of injustice and inequality. It is important to view those at the margins as individual members of our communities rather than collectively as mere recipients of services. The poor, those in vulnerable situations, those with disabilities, and the elderly are not objects but subjects and protagonists of development.[1] As Pope Francis has said, “Subsidiarity and participation are the two pillars of effective inclusion.”[2] This, in turn, leads to more durable, sustainable, and tailored responses to the problems faced by individuals, families, and communities.

The serious and pervasive effects of poverty make its eradication essential to the achievement of integral human development. Unfortunately, the voices of the poor so often go unheard in an increasingly consumeristic world, and even if their cries evoke a momentary sympathy it is soon drowned out by self-interest.[3] Meeting the immediate needs of those living in poverty is important, but it is not a lasting solution.[4] Rather, more creativity and resources are needed to address the root causes of poverty and enable

each person to flourish in accordance with his or her dignity. In doing so, the poor should be seen as partners, not beneficiaries, in solidarity for the common good.

Injustice, exploitation and lack of opportunity deprive people not only of basic necessities but also of meaning, purpose and hope. In this regard, the effects of poverty are not only material but spiritual and need to be addressed as such. Education is not only *enabling* but *ennobling*, not only providing knowledge but also preparing the person for life in a free society. Therefore, quality education must be accessible to all. Through its productive and social dimensions, work likewise serves both the common good and the individual.

Mr. Chair,

Thirty years ago, the International Year of the Family was observed to create “greater awareness of the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society.”^[5] Despite this recognition in both international law and constitutions across the globe, there is still much to be done to ensure its value is fully acknowledged. The family plays a vital role in caring for the young, the old, and those in need, and in some parts of the world, it is the only source of social protection. Children raised in a stable and supportive family environment tend to enjoy better health, as well as educational, and economic outcomes. Parents are the primary educators of their children, and the family is “the privileged school for learning generosity, sharing, [and] responsibility.”^[6]

Families today face many challenges, ranging from unemployment and housing shortages to natural disasters and conflict, with the poor most affected. In addition, many young people despair of starting a family because of economic instability. Lamentably, some families are unhealthy and even unsafe due to conflict and domestic violence. Addressing these problems requires supporting healthy family formation and family life, and intervening where necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing, of women and children in particular. Policies and programs must therefore address the impact of poverty on both the formation and fragmentation of families, including the contribution of education and employment to the promotion of stronger families and the reconciliation of work and family life, in order to achieve social development.

Mr. Chair,

We need committed efforts at all levels, from leaders to those in need, in a spirit of solidarity and subsidiarity, to ensure that all human beings can live in accordance with their dignity. The Catholic Church through its organizations working on the ground remains committed to doing its part in achieving integral human development.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[1] Cf. Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the Conference “Vulnerability and Community Between Welcome and Inclusion”*, 2 March 2024.

[2] Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences “Disability and the Human Condition, Changing the Social Determinants of Disabilities and Building a New Culture of Inclusion”*, 11 April 2024.

[3] Cf. Pope Francis, *Address to Participants in the Minerva Dialogues No. 4*, 27 March 2023.

[4] Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, No. 128 (2015).

[5] General Assembly Resolution 44/82, International Year of the Family, paragraph 2 (1989).

[6] Pope Francis, *Message to Participants in the 47th Social Week of Italian Catholics*, 11 September 2023.



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