

Address by Archbishop Celestino Migliore  
Holy See's Permanent Observer to the United Nations  
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Climate Change: the United Nations and the World at Work

Mr President,

The ongoing debate on climate change has helped put into focus the inescapable responsibility of one and all to care for the environment, thereby building consensus around the common objective of promoting a healthy environment for present and future generations.

The recent UN Climate Change Conference in Bali has shown that through increased concern for our neighbour, in particular for those most vulnerable to climatic change, we are better equipped to adopt strategies and policies which balance the needs of humanity with the urgency for a more responsible stewardship.

The Holy See assures of its collaboration towards achieving the objectives set in Bali. To this end, the personal commitment and numerous public appeals of Pope Benedict XVI have generated awareness campaigns for a renewed sense of respect for and the need to safeguard God's creation. Individuals and communities have started to change their lifestyles, aware that personal and collective behaviour impacts climate and the overall health of the environment. While such lifestyle changes at times may seem irrelevant, every small initiative to reduce or offset one's carbon footprint, be it the avoidance of the unnecessary use of transport or the daily effort to reduce energy consumption, contributes to mitigating environmental decay and concretely shows commitment to environmental care.

On a more practical side, the Holy See has already taken certain measures to reduce and offset the carbon emission of the Vatican City State, such as the use of solar panels and tree-planting. With its involvement in a reforestation project in Hungary, it will provide environmental benefits to the host country, assist in the recovery of an environmentally degraded tract of land, and provide local jobs.

The interrelated issues of environmental preservation, economic development and

climate change can have competing demands on our priorities and concerns. It is incumbent upon every individual and nation to seriously assume one's share of the responsibility to find and implement the most balanced approach possible to this challenge. Sustainable development provides the key to a strategy that harmoniously takes into account the demands of environmental preservation, climate change, economic development and basic human needs.

The use of "clean technologies" is an important component of sustainable development. To help industrializing countries avoid the errors that others committed in the past, highly industrialized countries should share with the former their more advanced and cleaner technologies. The pooling of resources makes initiatives of mitigation and adaptation economically accessible to most, thus assisting those less equipped to pursue development while safeguarding the environment. Moreover, markets must be encouraged to patronize "green economics" and not to sustain demand for goods whose very production causes environmental degradation. Consumers must be aware that their consumption patterns have direct impact on the health of the environment. Thus through interdependence, solidarity and accountability, individuals and nations together will be more able to balance the needs of sustainable development with those of good stewardship at every level.

Indeed, the challenge of climate change is at once individual, local, national and global. Accordingly, it urges a multilevel coordinated response, with mitigation and adaptation programmes simultaneously individual, local, national and global in their vision and scope.

My delegation, therefore, commends the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) for providing a global framework for concerted international action to mitigate climate change and to adapt to its impacts. The almost universal membership in the Convention will not fail to facilitate the launching of national strategies --- starting with those most vulnerable, like small-island States and coastal, low-lying populated areas --- and would promote a more equitable pooling of resources and technology to help vulnerable countries with lesser resources better understand and assess the risks they face. The "Bali Roadmap" presents a common vision, capable of overcoming self-interest through collective action. It demands a global alliance for the adoption of a coordinated international political strategy towards a healthy environment for all.

Thank you, Mr. President.