



Permanent Mission of the Holy See

Statement by H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Representative of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the General Segment of the 13th Session of the Human Rights Council Geneva, 3rd March 2010

Mr. President,

My delegation joins previous speakers in expressing our condolences and solidarity to the people of Chile for the victims of the recent earthquake.

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See wants to restate its conviction that the perspective of human rights provides a positive contribution for a solution to the current financial crisis. Even though some signs of recovery seem visible, the crisis continues to aggravate the conditions of millions of people in their access to the basic necessities of life and has adversely compromised the retirement plans of many. This situation, therefore, calls for new regulations and a sound global system of governance that ensures a sustainable and comprehensive path to development for all. In the establishment of new regulations and reliable governance there exists a unique opportunity to address the root causes of the crisis and to affirm an integrated approach to the implementation of all economic, social, civil and political human rights as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

United Nations reports give plenty of evidence regarding the many negative consequences of the financial crisis: the scandal of hunger, the growing inequality worldwide, millions of unemployed people and millions of others reduced to extreme poverty, institutional failures, lack of social protection for countless vulnerable persons. These imbalances, the Holy Father reminds us in the recent encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, “are produced when economic action, conceived merely as an engine for wealth creation, is detached from political action, conceived as a means for pursuing justice through redistribution”¹ Equity and justice are essential criteria in the management of the world economy.

The enjoyment of human rights becomes possible when States translate principles into law and make change on the ground a reality. While the State is the first actor in the implementation of human rights, it cannot fail to collaborate with all other players in its own civil society and with the international community, interconnected and interdependent as we are in today’s globalized world. In fact, the common goal is the protection and respect of human dignity that binds together the

¹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, 36

entire human family, a unity rooted on the four basic principles of the centrality of the human person, solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good. In this context, the review of the Human Rights Council should aim also at making change on the ground a reality and the concrete implementation of human rights, its priority.

Mr. President,

An important message conveyed by Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (CV) in this moment of economic crisis is the invitation to overcome the obsolete dichotomy between the economic, social and ecological spheres. Markets and freedom are important requirements in building a healthy society, but the context within which they operate is global and must include the universal principles of honesty, justice, solidarity and in addition the principles of “reciprocity and gift”². The focus of concern in the reform of the financial system, and the economic models that are operative in government programs and corporate policies, should shift from goods and services to the persons who are recipients of these services; in this way, they have access to the resources to improve their position in life and thus place their talents at the service of their local community and the universal common good. The social doctrine of the Church has always pursued such a goal with special care for the more vulnerable members of society. In fact, by giving priority to human beings and the created order that supports them on their earthly journey, we can modify the rules that govern the financial system to serve concrete change, to move away from old habits of greed that led to the present crisis, and to promote effective integral development and the implementation of human rights since “the primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is the human person in his or her integrity.” (CV, 25)

² Ibid. “The great challenge before us, accentuated by the problems of development in this global era and made even more urgent by the economic and financial crisis, is to demonstrate, in thinking and behaviour, not only that traditional principles of social ethics like transparency, honesty and responsibility cannot be ignored or attenuated, but also that in *commercial relationships* the *principle of gratuitousness* and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must *find their place within normal economic activity*. This is a human demand at the present time, but it is also demanded by economic logic. It is a demand both of charity and of truth.” (CV, 36)