



# HOLY SEE

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE UNITED NATIONS 25 EAST 39th STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10016-0903 (212) 370-7885

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore  
Apostolic Nuncio  
Permanent Observer of the Holy See**

**Economic and Social Council  
42<sup>nd</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development**

**On Item 4:  
Contribution of the Programme of Action of the  
International Conference on Population and Development  
to the internationally agreed development goals,  
including the Millennium Development Goals**

**New York, 1 April 2009**

Madam Chair,

My delegation takes this opportunity to express its best wishes to you and the Bureau for a productive session and looks forward to working with the membership to find means to ensure that the MDGs continue to receive the proper focus and commitment.

In reading the preparatory documents for this session of the Commission one cannot help but get the impression that populations are seen as the obstacle to greater social and economic development rather than vital contributors to the success of the Millennium Development Goals and greater sustainable development. Along with the preparatory statements by some NGOs, this literature gives the impression that the very institution which launched the MDGs fifteen years ago is giving priority to population control and getting the poor to accept these arrangements rather than primarily focusing upon its commitments to addressing education, health care, access to water, sanitation and employment.

Prior to the International Conference on Population and Development, many demographic experts and politicians warned that an increasing world population would create an overwhelming burden upon the world with dire possible consequences including food shortages, mass starvation, environmental destruction and resource driven conflict. Now, fifteen years later, the population growth has begun to slow, food production continues to rise to the point where it is capable of supporting a larger global population and is even being diverted to the production of fuel. It is almost ironic that environmental destruction is perpetrated primarily by States with lower growth rates and that developed countries are supporting population growth at home while simultaneously working to reduce it in developing countries.

Further, the increased birth rates in Africa over the last decades have been identified by experts as lowering the elderly dependency ratio and presenting the population with a plentiful workforce capable of providing the Continent with an unprecedented advantage in economic terms over regions whose ageing populations show growing economic challenges. To capitalize on this opportunity, for Africa and ultimately for the whole world, greater commitment must be made to provide economic assistance and investment in human capital and infrastructure

to support economic growth. Consequently, additional funding programs which focus upon lowering population growth rather than fostering an environment for development will slow, not expedite, the achievement of the MDGs.

The stabilization of population and the need to foster development are serious issues. The Holy See continues to believe that the proper focus for addressing global development should primarily be on programmes and values which support personal and social development. Access to education, economic opportunity, political stability, basic health care and support for the family must remain the basis for achieving the MDGs. These priorities throughout history have provided the platform for economic and social growth and accompanying increase in responsible parenthood.

The Holy See's offices and members of faith communities continue to serve at the front-line for addressing greater global poverty, human rights and development. Through its continued presence and emphasis on providing quality and affordable education, health care, access to food and respect for all human rights, the Holy See and its various organizations show that care for the poor, along with overall poverty reduction, serves as a model for a human centered approach to development.

My delegation reaffirms its reservations made at the Cairo and Beijing Conferences as well as its consistent affirmation that abortion is not a legitimate form of sexual and reproductive health, rights or services. Likewise, it hopes that international organizations and policymakers maintain or, where necessary, redirect public efforts towards the human centered approach to achieving the MDGs.

Thank you, Madam Chair.