



Statement of H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza
Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN

Forty-ninth Session of the Commission on Population and Development
Agenda Item 4: **Strengthening the demographic evidence base
for the post-2015 development agenda**

New York, 13 April 2016

Mr. Chair,

My delegation wishes to congratulate you and the bureau on your election to the Commission in such a pivotal year. We look forward to working with you and with other delegations as we seek to ensure that this Commission is “fit for purpose” and contributes to the successful implementation of a truly people-centered, inclusive and integrated 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2030 Agenda has bound us all together in our commitment to the worthy and ambitious goal of freeing the entire human race from poverty by redirecting our steps onto a more sustainable and resilient path.

The realization of the carefully crafted goals and targets will require more than our collective goodwill to leave no one behind. It will also require quality demographic data and a strong evidence base upon which we can build viable strategies and policies for their implementation and, even more importantly, upon which we can build a dedicated framework for their follow-up and review, especially at the national level.

Mr. Chair,

Two main concerns were identified during the discussions on data during the 2030 Agenda. First, quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to measure progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Second, and even more importantly, greater efforts are needed to strengthen the statistical capacities of developing countries, particularly the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, Small Island Developing States and many middle-income countries. Without enabling them to respond more effectively to their own national priorities, the goal of reducing gaping social inequalities and economic disparities at both national and international levels will never be achieved.

Moreover, improving data and building national capacity are not enough; they require national and international policies unfettered from narrow ideologies. The criteria used in determining what data to gather, the way they are disaggregated and how they are interpreted to inform public policy are not secondary factors in achieving sustainable

development. In fact, data are never neutral; they always say something about one's understanding of the human person and how priorities are set.

Mr. Chair,

There have already been countless attempts to eradicate poverty and to find comprehensive development solutions. However, despite good intentions, in so many of these attempts and solutions the human person is lost in the midst of complex and sophisticated indicators, oftentimes orienting policy priorities that see the human person more as an obstacle rather than the reason for development.

As Pope Francis affirmed in his address to the General Assembly on September 25, "for all this, the simplest and best measure and indicator of the implementation of the new Agenda for development will be effective, practical and immediate access, on the part of all, to essential material and spiritual goods: housing, dignified and properly remunerated employment, adequate food and drinking water; religious freedom and, more generally, spiritual freedom and education. These pillars of integral human development have a common foundation, which is the right to life and, more generally, what we could call the right to existence of human nature itself."

As the international community works together to strengthen the demographic evidence base for the 2030 Agenda, my delegation wishes to underscore that stable and just societies are not built on individualism. They are born out of a culture of solidarity that sees others not as rivals or mere statistics but as brothers and sisters, not as obstacles but as co-agents of our collective development.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.