



**Statement by Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, Permanent Observer
of the Holy See to the United Nations, at the Fifty-Fifth Session of
the Commission on Population and Development
New York, 25-29 April 2022**

Mr. Chair,

The Holy See Delegation is pleased to participate in this Fifty-Fifth Session of the Commission on Population and Development and to offer some reflections on its special theme: “Population and sustainable development, in particular, sustained and inclusive economic growth.”

The *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*¹ recognizes that issues of population, sustainable development and economic growth are ultimately about human beings, their dignity and needs. This understanding is further reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which makes clear that development is not and cannot be limited to economics. Sustained economic growth must be based on comprehensive measures to invest in the integral development of every human person, which has economic, ecological, social, cultural, spiritual, and ethical dimensions.

Mr. Chair,

Each human being has an inestimable value; it is for this reason that States have affirmed multiple times that “[h]uman beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development.”² Yet, many policies reflect a view of the human person as an obstacle to development or a problem to be managed rather than our most valuable resource. This is seen *inter alia* in population growth being cited as a major cause of the increasing numbers of people experiencing poverty, and the suggestion that fertility rate reduction

¹ International Conference on Population and Development, Programme of Action, 3.1-3.4.

² Cf., e.g., A/Conf.151/26 Annex, Rio Declaration on Environment and Development Principle 1.

strategies are the answer.³ This ignores, however, the fact that reducing the number of people born into poverty is in no way the same as reducing poverty itself.

Similarly, increasing life expectancy rates and the consequent growth in the proportion of older persons as part of the general population contribute to the perception that the elderly are a burden to society as they do not generate income but require assistance and support. This utilitarian view reduces the value of a person to what he or she produces, and is completely at odds with a more holistic of vision of the human person, especially as they age. Throughout all of life, the dignity of the person must remain at the heart of their integral development.

Mr. Chair,

The violation of the inherent and inalienable right of every person to life is never the answer to challenges arising from sustainable development, nor is it a means to achieve economic growth. Rather, respect for life from the moment of conception to natural death must always be at the core of all development policies. The real challenge before us is, therefore, not the world's growing and ageing population, but rather the unaddressed root causes of poverty. In this context, the Holy See stresses the importance of assistance to the family – the fundamental unit of society – by providing it with adequate and effective means of support, both for the upbringing of children and for looking after and integrating the elderly into society.

In conclusion, the Holy See hopes that this session and its discussions will advance both an understanding of and measures aimed at promoting the integral human development for all.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

³ Cf. E/CN.9/2022/2, Report of the Secretary-General.