



INTERVENTION BY THE HOLY SEE  
BEFORE THE PLENARY OF THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

**ADDRESS GIVEN BY H.E. ARCHBISHOP JAMES PATRICK GREEN  
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO, HEAD OF DELEGATION**

*Lima, Peru  
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*Mr President,*

At this very decisive moment in the history of climate negotiations we have to come to the point where we must overcome inaction. As Pope Francis said in his Message to our Conference, the issues we are debating “affects all humanity, especially the poor and future generations: [...] it is a serious ethical and moral responsibility [...] There is a clear, definite and urgent ethical imperative to act [...] We can only find adequate solutions if we act together”.

The longer we wait, the more it will cost; more victims will suffer from our inaction and the greatest weight will fall on the most vulnerable, the poorest peoples and future generations: what is at issue here is respect for their fundamental human rights.

Our earth is the object of our constant concern and requires our constant attention. We are not the masters of nature, but its stewards. We need to respect it, but “instead we are often guided by the pride of dominating, possessing, manipulating, exploiting; we do not ‘preserve’ the earth, [...] we do not consider it as a freely-given gift to look after” (*Pope Francis, General Audience, 5 June 2013*). “Respect for the environment, however, means more than not destroying it; it also means using it for good purposes” (*Pope Francis, Address to the European Parliament, 25 November 2014*).

The Holy See’s Delegation has repeatedly called for a clear and firm political will to agree on tangible and concrete action, and has urged the adoption of common binding measures and adequate budgets for effective and sustainable action on mitigation and adaptation, as well as on sharing technologies and know-how. The operational bases needed to facilitate this mutual responsibility are already available or within our reach.

The critical problem of global warming is inextricably bound to the search for authentic integral human development. We can achieve two interconnected objectives: combating poverty and easing the effects of climate change. As stewards of nature, we can learn a lot from the signs it is sending us. The worries and the concerns about our common home make us aware that we are part of one interdependent human family. The decisions and behavior of one member of this family have profound consequences for all others. There are no borders, no more political, social or geographical barriers behind which one can be isolated. There is no room for the globalization of indifference, the economy of exclusion or the throwaway culture so often denounced by Pope Francis (*cf. His Eminence Card. Pietro Parolin to the UN Climate Summit, 23 September 2014*)

Pope Francis warns that “the effective fight against global warming is only possible through a responsible collective response, that overcomes particular interests and behaviors and develops itself free from political and economic pressures. A collective response that is also capable of contrasting

attitudes of distrust and promote a culture of solidarity, encounter and dialogue; able to act responsibility to protect the planet and the human family”, ensuring that present and future generations have the possibility of living in a safe and worthy environment. This is the great challenge facing not only the Conference, but all human work.

Justice, respect and equity are at the basis of this culture.

If we remain inactive in addressing climate change, even before drafting a new agreement, we already violate equity, one of the core principles of the Convention. We have only one year left to the COP-21 in Paris, where the world is expecting an answer in the form of a new climate Treaty. We were unable to give that answer in 2009 when we failed to reach an agreement in Copenhagen.

The IPCC’s Fifth Assessment Report, released last October, emphasizes once more that action is extremely urgent and highlights the risks of inaction. Let us work together for the common good rather than point at each other and pass responsibility to others. This requires the full, responsible and dedicated collaboration of all, according to their possibilities and circumstances.

Mr President,

Technical solutions are necessary, but not sufficient. We must also consider the central factor of education: education aimed at fostering a sense of responsibility in children and adults towards environmentally sound patterns of development, the stewardship of creation, and solidarity among people. The current lifestyle with its throwaway culture is unsustainable and should have no place in our lives. The Holy See is continuously making significant contributions in this regard. Worldwide, many Catholic educational institutions are engaged in promoting such education for environmental responsibility, which should be ever more deeply anchored in respect for “human ecology”. Moreover, Episcopal Conferences, dioceses, parishes and faith-based NGOs have been devoted to advocacy and management of ecological programs for a number of years.

The Holy See hopes that everyone will join in adopting an ambitious holistic approach to ensure the integral development of all persons, countries and creation itself.

Thank you, Mr President.

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