

**Statement of His Eminence Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson
President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See**

**Summit of Heads of State and Government
on the Millennium Development Goals
New York, 20 September 2010**

Mr. President,

I have the honour to convey the cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Heads of State and Government assembled here during these days to work together towards a world free of the plague of extreme poverty and to ensure that all children, women and men in every country of the world have the conditions necessary to live their lives in freedom and dignity.

In the year 2000, with the unanimous endorsement of the Millennium Declaration, all Heads of State at the United Nations acknowledged that the international struggle against poverty could not be limited to the management of the great economic variables, such as finances and foreign debts, commerce and development aid. Rather, the Family of Nations appreciated the more specifically “human” aspects of development, such as eradicating hunger, promoting education, providing health care and social services, ensuring equal opportunities for work, and advocating responsible stewardship of the environment.

Although many countries are still far from achieving the MDGs on time, great progress has been made in various ways towards halving the number of people living under the absolute poverty line. This encourages us all to discover the weaknesses, incongruities and conflicts in the program, to resolve them and so move on to attain full success.

Indeed, much still needs to be done to maintain and strengthen political mobilization, through continued economic and financial solidarity, in order to guarantee the availability of resources. In this regard, the Holy See emphasizes the importance of strengthening a global partnership for development which is a necessary condition for the achievement of all the other goals, and supports the full

and integral compliance of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration of Financing for Development.

All governments, both of developed and developing countries, must accept their responsibility to fight corruption, tax evasion and all reprehensible conduct in the area of business and finances. The “rule of law” and the promotion of rights to education, job security and basic health care must be upheld.

The campaign for development carried out by international agencies has revealed that success is not attributable so much to economic assistance, as to creativity and resourcefulness, commitment and the sacrifice of countless “small actors” such as the plethora of “Faith-based Organizations”. These give life to the expression “small is beautiful”, predicted many years ago by economists and strongly inspired by the *Social Teachings of the Church*.

For all these reasons, population policies which violate human dignity do not help the MDGs to attain their sublime objectives; still less do they alleviate poverty. I know the poverty of deprivation and exclusion, as an African. I have encountered really poor and destitute people in my life and ministry as a religious leader, and I would like to ask the International Community, especially the developed countries, not to underestimate the resourcefulness of the poor, and not to find them burdensome. Ensure to poor countries the effective mainframe of Goal 8, and they will assume the shared responsibility and national ownership of achieving the other goals. MDGs should be used to fight poverty and not to eliminate the poor!

The inherent and equal dignity, the individuality, and the transcendence of each human being must be the foundation of each and every policy on development. In this regard, on the much debated issue of maternal health, the Holy See, respectfully and fervently invites the Countries participating in this HLM, to provide quality resources for the health care needs of mothers and their babies, including the unborn. Moreover, repeated references in the Outcome Document to “sexual and reproductive health” and “family planning” raise deep concerns. These are controversial terms, often interpreted as including access to abortion and methods of family planning that are not in accordance with the natural law, known by right reason.

Mr. President,

The Family of Nations has committed itself to fighting material poverty. This is a key and noble goal to pursue; but in this effort let us never forget that material poverty has partners—relational, emotional, and spiritual poverty. The human person must be at the centre of concern in our quest for development. If everyone's political, religious and economic rights and freedoms are respected, we will shift the paradigm from merely trying to manage poverty, to creating wealth; from viewing the person as a burden, to seeing the person as part of the solution. It is with this conviction that the Holy See desires to collaborate with this Summit in the quest of an era of peace, social justice and authentic human integral development.

Thank you, Mr. President.