

Holy See: Humans Aren't Development Barriers

Promotes Green Economy Centered on Persons

NEW YORK, MARCH 9, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Human persons should be seen as the center of development, rather than a barrier, affirmed the Holy See delegation to the United Nations.

On Monday, Charles Clark, professor of economics at St. John's University, addressed the Second Preparatory Committee for the U.N. Conference on Sustainable Development on behalf of Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations.

The meetings are underway for the preparation of the Rio+20 conference on development, which will take place June 4-6, 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, marking the 20th anniversary of the 1992 Earth Summit.

Clark stated, "In pursuing the goal of 'Green Economy in the context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication' (GESDPE), my delegation hopes that we would not forget that the purpose of development is integral human development and that all our strategies and practices must be judged by this standard -- for the human beings are and must remain at the center of our concern."

"If humans in their full humanity are not viewed as the ultimate goal of development as was agreed in Rio twenty years ago, then we fear that humans will be seen by many as the primary barrier to development," he warned.

The delegate added, "We can be certain which humans these will be: the poor; the marginalized; the inconvenient; those yet to be born and those who due to age, disability or illness cannot defend themselves."

He observed that "most of the development strategies and policies that have failed to promote integral human development in the past have done so because they reduced humans to a shadow of their humanity."

Clark explained: "On the one hand we are told that self-interest and greed are the sole drivers of human behavior, and that 'free markets' are all that is needed to turn private vice into public virtue.

"On the other hand we are told that human nature is what society makes it, giving us a development strategy that centers on structures and institutions, with the hope that the right institutions will be enough to promote development."

The whole truth

He acknowledged that "each view has part of the truth: Humans often are driven by self-interest and social institutions do greatly shape human attitudes and actions, markets and government policy both have potential to promote the common good."

"But humanity cannot be reduced to either selfish egos or social constructs," the delegate asserted.

"A full understanding of what it means to be human must also include the basic solidarity that is a necessary part of our humanity, that comports to the fundamental dignity of each person and that demands justice," he said.

"An economy not grounded in a people-centered ethics and morality will undoubtedly instrumentalize the goods of the earth for the benefit of the rich and powerful," Clark warned.

He continued: "It will turn social and environmental indicators, which can be valuable tools for helping to promote authentic human development, into statistical fixations and false goals that give the appearance of progress without producing the reality of true progress.

"Or worse, they can become excuses for sacrificing human rights and assaulting human dignity, all for a distorted view of the common good."

"Real development will not and cannot be produced by changes in structures or market incentives alone," the delegate stated. "Of equal importance is the required change of hearts and minds as well as our subsequent action."

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