



HOLY SEE

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**Statement by Monsignor Pietro Parolin
Undersecretary for the Holy See's Relations with States**

62nd session of the UN General Assembly

**High-level event on climate change
entitled "The future is in our hands:
addressing the leadership challenge of climate change"**

New York, 24 September 2007

Madam Facilitator,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express some considerations of the Holy See in light of what we have heard today from the preceding distinguished speakers.

Climate change is a serious concern and an inescapable responsibility for scientists and other experts, political and governmental leaders, local administrators and international organizations, as well as every sector of human society and each human person. My delegation wishes to stress the underlying moral imperative that all, without exception, have a grave responsibility to protect the environment.

Beyond the various reactions to and interpretations of the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the best scientific assessments available have established a link between human activity and climate change. However, the results of these scientific assessments, and the remaining uncertainties, should neither be exaggerated nor minimized in the name of politics, ideologies or self-interest. Rather they now need to be studied closely in order to give a sound basis for raising awareness and making effective policy decisions.

In recent times, it has been unsettling to note how some commentators have said that we should actually exploit our world to the full, with little or no heed to the consequences, using a world view supposedly based on faith. We strongly believe that this is a fundamentally reckless approach. At the other extreme, there are those who hold up the earth as the only good, and would characterize humanity as an irredeemable threat to the earth, whose population and activity need to be controlled by various drastic means. We strongly believe that such assertions would place human beings and their needs at the service of an inhuman ecology. I have highlighted these two extreme positions to make my point, but similar, though less extreme attitudes, would also clearly impede any sound global attempts to promote mitigation, adaptation, resilience and the safeguarding of our common future.

Madam Facilitator,

Since no country alone can solve the problems related to our common environment, we need to overcome self-interest through collective action. On the part of the international community, this presupposes the adoption of a coordinated, effective and prompt international political strategy capable of

responding to such a complex question. It would identify ways and means of mitigation and adaptation which are economically accessible to most, enhance sustainable development and foster a healthy environment. The economic aspect of such ways and means should be seriously taken into account, considering that poor nations and sectors of society are particularly vulnerable to the adverse consequences of climate change, due to lesser resources and capacity to mitigate their effects and adapt to altered surroundings.

It is foreseeable that programmes of mitigation and adaptation would meet a series of barriers and obstacles, not so much of a technological nature, but more so of a social nature, such as consumer behaviour and preferences, and of a political nature, like government policies. We must look at education, especially among the young, to change inbred, selfish attitudes towards consumption and exploitation of natural resources. Likewise, government policies giving economic incentives and financial breaks for more environmentally friendly technologies will give the private sector the positive signal they need to programme their product development in such direction. For instance, present-day research into energy mixes and improving energy efficiency would be made more attractive if accompanied by public funding and other financial incentives.

Madam Facilitator,

We often hear in the halls of the United Nations of “the responsibility to protect”. The Holy See believes that applies also in the context of climate change. States have a shared “responsibility to protect” the world’s climate through mitigation/adaptation, and above all a shared “responsibility to protect” our planet and ensure that present and future generations be able to live in a healthy and safe environment.

The pace of achieving and codifying a new international consensus on climate change is not always matched by an equally expeditious and effective pace of implementation of such agreements. States are free to adopt international conventions and treaties, but unless our words are matched with effective action and accountability, we would do little to avert a bleak future and may find ourselves gathering again not too long from now to lament another collective failure. We sincerely hope that States will seize the opportunity that will be presented to them shortly at the next Conference on the Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali.

Thank you, Madam Facilitator.