



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE
Intervention of H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio,
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations Office and other
International Organizations in Geneva
at the 105th Session of the International Labour Conference

Geneva, 2nd June 2016

Mr President,

1. The Delegation of the Holy See congratulates the ILO for its committed service to social development through the collaborative action of workers, employers and governments, as it prepares to celebrate its 100th Anniversary. The preamble of its Constitution, which states that there shall be no lasting peace without social justice, continues to provide a strong warning and a welcome encouragement to guide our reflection on the “future of work”¹.
2. We feel today a sense of urgency as much as we feel a sense of responsibility. The information contained in the reports and analyses of this Organization regarding the inability to create a sufficient number of dignified and stable jobs is a cause of serious concern.
3. We would like to stress, as done in the previous session, the pressing issue of youth unemployment. Despite a mild recovery in the 2012-2014 period, the youth unemployment rate remains well above its pre-crisis level. For millions of young people around the world finding a decent job is still a lengthy hard struggle. As Pope Francis reminds us, “we cannot resign ourselves to losing a whole generation of young people who don't have the strong dignity of work”². The final goal of the International Community has to be a recovery based on substantial job creation with reference to the principle of subsidiarity that allows each individual and each business to be the protagonist of the development of society as a whole. It is a moral obligation. “If we want to rethink our society, we need to create dignified and well-paying jobs, especially for our young people”³.

¹ Cfr. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/leg/download/constitution.pdf>

² Pope Francis, Meeting with the Young People of the Dioceses of Abruzzo and Molise, Castelpetroso, 5 July 2014.

³ Pope Francis, *Address* at the Conferral of the Charlemagne Prize, 6 May 2016.

4. To do so requires coming up with new, more inclusive and equitable economic models, aimed not at serving the few, but at benefiting ordinary people and society as a whole. It would involve passing from a revenue-directed economy, profiting from speculation and lending at interest, to a social economy that invests in persons by creating jobs and providing training. At the same time, a wave of technological innovation is altering the capacity of modern manufacturing and service activities to generate jobs.

5. Pope Francis has repeatedly warned against the temptation to reduce costs by replacing workers with advanced technology. The worldwide financial and economic crisis has highlighted the gravely deficient human perspective, which reduces man to just one of his needs, namely, consumption. Worse yet, human beings themselves are nowadays considered as consumer goods, which can be used and thrown away. The replacement of workers by technology raises grave ethical challenges because it elevates economic efficiency and productivity over human dignity. The Holy See argues that in taking this path, we end up working against ourselves. “To stop investing in people, in order to gain greater short-term financial gain, is bad business for society.”⁴

6. Human dignity and economic, social and political factors demand that we continue, “To prioritize the goal of access to steady employment for everyone”⁵. We need, in particular, to look for innovative solutions so that economic growth and well-being are not disconnected from employment. “It will be ‘better business’ to put technology at the service of the common good, and the common good includes decent work for everyone in our single common home”⁶. Guided and directed by the Sustainable Developments Goals, we should continue to promote the idea “that it is no longer sufficient to measure human progress in terms of economic growth and the accumulation of material wealth. Work acquires its true character when it is decent and sustainable for workers, employers, governments, communities, and the environment”⁷. “It implies exertion and fatigue to produce and achieve good results, but also the ability to transform reality and fulfil a personal vocation”⁸. Thus, work expresses and increases man’s dignity⁹. “There is a practical advantage as well in this approach. The *subjective, personal* dimension in work affects the actual *objective* result in all activities, but especially in services, in

⁴ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 128.

⁵ Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, 32.

⁶ Cardinal Peter Turkson, Welcome speech at the International Seminar “Sustainable development and the future of work in the context of the Jubilee of Mercy”, Rome, 2 May 2016.

⁷ *Idem*.

⁸ Statement by H.E. Archbishop Silvano M. Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the 101st Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva, 7 June 2012.

⁹ Cfr. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem exercens*, 27.

research and technological innovation, that is, in those economic activities that promote knowledge and true wealth creation, human and social development”¹⁰.

7. Globalization has generated the continuing internationalization of the world’s production system, with increasingly prevalent global supply chains frequently making it impossible to identify a single national origin of finished products. The proliferation of global supply chains has profoundly transformed the nature of cross-border production, investment, trade and employment. The global supply chains have played an important role in the significant growth in international trade in recent decades.
8. Global supply chains have provided new opportunities for employment in developing and emerging economies, including for workers who had difficulty accessing wage employment or formal jobs. However, wages and working time are also affected by the terms of purchasing between the buyer and its suppliers, which often reflect the asymmetrical bargaining position of the two partners and the power of the buyers to switch suppliers. In these conditions, wages become the adjustment variable at the end of the supply chain, with competitive pressures leading to lower wages and longer working hours. In the first social encyclical, *Rerum novarum* (1891), Pope Leo XIII stressed the centrality of human dignity, stating that “to misuse [people] as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers - that is truly shameful and inhuman.”¹¹ The Holy Father argued vigorously that workers were owed a just or living wage. This was not to be equated with the wage determined by the law of the marketplace. “Wages cannot be left solely to the whim of the market, but must be influenced by justice and equity - a wage that allows people to live a truly human life and to fulfill family obligations”¹². In the words of Pope Francis, it is one of the ways people “find meaning, a destiny, and to live with dignity, to ‘live well’.”¹³
9. Climate change, and the increase in both sudden onset and slow onset disasters, pose massive challenges to governments both in developed and developing countries. Some of these challenges relate to the sustainable provision of a climate-resilient infrastructure. The effects of climate change are having negative impacts on economic and social development in general and on enterprises and workers in particular, by disrupting businesses, destroying workplaces and undermining income opportunities. As stressed by Pope Francis, in *Laudato si’*, “it is essential to seek comprehensive solutions which consider the interactions within natural

¹⁰ Statement Tomasi, *op. cit.*

¹¹ *Rerum novarum*, 20.

¹² Cardinal Turkson, *op. cit.*

¹³ Pope Francis, *Address at the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, Santa Cruz de la Sierra (Bolivia)*, 9 July 2015.

systems themselves and with social systems. We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis, which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature”¹⁴.

10. In conclusion, Mr President,

The Holy See wishes to reaffirm its interest in contributing to the dialogues on the future of work in the context of the 100th Anniversary of the Organization. We look towards the continuation of this process with the hope that people, workers, their families and their communities be placed at the centre of future sustainable development and decent work policies, as recommended by the Philadelphia Declaration (1944).

¹⁴ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 139.