

**JPIC Linking Day  
Saturday, September 27th, 2008  
Vaughan House, London**

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***One People, One Creation-  
Forging the future together  
Global challenges require global solutions***

It's a great pleasure for me to be with you here today and to have such a stimulating theme to talk about.

Of course, as Secretary General of Caritas Internationalis, home for me now is Rome. One of the great, but simple, pleasures of life in Rome is to sit out at a pavement café with a good cup of Italian coffee, and read the newspaper, or simply watch the world go by. I'm afraid this is not a pleasure I get time to enjoy very often, but the other weekend my husband and I were sat on a sunny street corner, savouring the intense aroma of strong black coffee, served in tiny cups and accompanied by glasses of water. Then my eye was caught by a headline in the newspaper in front of me: "Britain's water habit leaves others parched." And alongside it, was printed a stark statistic: "140 litres of water are needed to grow the beans for a single cup of coffee."

That's roughly what the average British household uses each day for washing and drinking, and much, much more than the average household gets in the world's poorest countries. So I couldn't help asking myself whether that 140 litres of precious water could have been put to better use in the country where those coffee beans were grown.

This is just one example of how the simplest of actions – like having a tiny cup of coffee – can impact the lives of people thousands of miles away. We do not live in isolation; we are not insulated from the rest of humanity – it seems that everything we do has implications for our fellow human beings. But if this is true, then maybe the smallest things that we do can also have beneficial effects for people many miles away.

This is a good time to reflect on that thought because this week we reached the half-way point towards the 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. And what is clear is that we risk failing to achieve these goals unless there is a massive concerted effort over the next few years.

On Thursday, to mark this milestone in the MDG programme, world leaders gathered at the United Nations in New York for a high-level event to renew their commitments to the goals, to review progress, identify gaps, and commit to concrete efforts, resources and mechanisms to bridge those gaps.

Our Caritas president, Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez, was among a small group of civil society representatives personally invited by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to address the meeting

Calling on world leaders to honour their promises to deliver increased aid, the Cardinal said the world is suffering from an acute poverty of imagination.

“We need to be able to imagine ourselves not in a ‘Third World’ and a ‘First World’ but in one world in which our duties to the poor are shared,” he said.

This is a vital point: If we are to achieve these goals – and at our current rate, some of them will take another hundred years – we must realise this shared responsibility. We must all become involved and consider what we can do as individuals to help to make a difference.

The UN Millennium Declaration, which resulted in the MDGs, was adopted by 189 nations and signed by 147 heads of states and governments. It spoke of the “collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level,” and of “our duty to all the world’s people, especially the most vulnerable and in particular to the children of the world, to whom the future belongs.”

The MDGs provide a common framework for the international development community, to guide policies and programmes, and to assess effectiveness. They set clearly identifiable objectives and a timetable. And they give us the means by which we can hold governments to account against the commitments they have made.

But there is a danger that the MDGs are seen as solely a project for governments, as some kind of competition between countries, like a kind of Olympics in which achieving an MDG is like winning a gold medal for your country.

A report published earlier this year criticised the MDGs for being ‘too generic’ – it claimed that they risked branding some countries, particularly in Africa, as failures if they did not achieve the goals. It complained about the lack of a level playing field and seemed to suggest that we should somehow ‘lower the bar’ for some countries. In other words we would accept different levels of poverty reduction in different countries.

But if the MDGs are not met in some countries by 2015, that is not a failure for those countries; that is a failure for the whole world... and we will all share the shame. No country stands alone in the struggle to eradicate poverty – this is a global enterprise.

We in the development and humanitarian community need to be especially conscious of this reality. We are apt to think of this as “our job”. We are the professionals; we’re out there working in the field; and we are rattling the cages of our government leaders to get them to deliver on their aid promises. As Caritas, we are certainly doing all that, and will continue to do so, but ending world poverty is not a project for aid workers and governments alone – it is a project for the whole of humanity. As the title of today’s event puts it: “*One People, One Creation – Forging the future together.*”

We all have a role to play in this project, whether we are government leaders who need to honour their commitments to increase their overseas aid spending; whether we are working in the field, as I know some of you here today do, delivering health and education services; whether we are part of the Justice and Peace movement, whether we provide financial support to Caritas organisations such as CAFOD and SCIAF here in the UK; or whether we simply contribute by making a change in lifestyle, “living more simply that others may simply live.”

The MDGs are a focal point for humanity to join together and galvanise our efforts to end the scandal of global poverty. But we will only succeed if we can make that unity of purpose a reality and governments, faith-based organisations, civil society, and the poor themselves, are able to fulfil their roles.

When we move on to discuss some of these issues later, perhaps we can consider this question of shared responsibility, and what it means for individuals and for organisations such as Caritas and JPIC.

Our theme for today invites us to think about how the causes and effects of global poverty are interrelated, and this has been one of the successes of the MDGs – they highlight the multi-faceted nature of poverty. They recognise that poverty is not just about hunger, it is about health, education, gender equality, environmental sustainability and much more.

One of the principal problems we face in the humanitarian and development world, is how to raise awareness of global poverty, how to communicate the scale of it and how to explain its complex nature and the many different strategies that are needed to defeat it.

One of the most obvious effects of global poverty is, of course, that it kills people – and in vast numbers. But these are not deaths that grab the headlines, because they happen every day, indeed they happen every minute. While natural disasters or humanitarian crises demand our attention, the daily reality of global poverty is just not news.

For example, two hundred and thirty thousand people died as a result of the Asian tsunami that struck in December 2004. It was without doubt a major tragedy and attracted a record sum of more than seven billion dollars from the general public to help the victims. The stark reality is, however, that the same number of people die *every five days* from the effects of extreme poverty.

But poverty is not just about people dying. It is about people living... Living from day to day with inadequate nutrition, living with disease, living without proper housing, without education, clean water, and security.

I could give you all sorts of statistics to illustrate the effects of global poverty, but for me, the reality of poverty is the stories of individual people. It’s talking to a woman in a refugee camp in Darfur whose home was burnt to the ground, who witnessed her husband and son being shot, who was raped and beaten. It’s talking to a child in Zimbabwe who has lost both parents to Aids, who is HIV positive herself, and caring for her younger brothers and sisters.

Statistics often paint a bleak picture of reality and sometimes this is necessary. But statistics don't show the full picture. They don't reveal the resilience of the human spirit. They don't reveal that in the midst of such suffering, there is hope.

This is important because the sheer immensity of the problem of global poverty can be overwhelming. We have to overcome that feeling of helplessness, the feeling that there is nothing that can be done.

So, some more questions we might consider are:

- *How do we keep the issue of global poverty on the world agenda?*
- *How do we keep hope alive and tackle that pernicious perception that aid simply does not work?*

All too often, we hear the complaint that billions of dollars have been given in overseas aid during the last 50 years, and all to no effect. Poor governance and corruption in developing countries is often blamed for the failure of development aid to eradicate poverty. But this is far too simplistic an argument. We need to question the actions of donor governments who have supported corrupt dictatorships when it has suited them, and of companies that have encouraged corrupt practices to further their business interests in developing countries.

And we need to closely examine how our aid has been delivered, and learn from our mistakes. Have we directed our aid to where it can be most effective and, more importantly, where it is most needed? Or are we primarily supporting our own national self-interests?

Has our aid been tied to too many conditions that have meant developing countries have not been able to manage their own development programmes?

As Catholics, our preferential option for the poor demands that we call on our governments to target the poorest, particularly those who are sidelined from the economic growth associated with globalisation.

And the principle of subsidiarity means that we call for aid delivery that is a true partnership between donor and recipient governments, in which recipients take leadership of the development process.

At this half-way point towards 2015, it is important to highlight the success stories, as well as point out where we are falling short. It is not all bad news, and there are some good examples of real progress in lifting people out of poverty.

In 1990, more than 1.2 billion people – 28 per cent of the developing world's population – lived in extreme poverty. By 2002, that proportion had decreased to 19 per cent. During that period, rates of extreme poverty fell rapidly in much of Asia, where the number of people living on less than a dollar a day dropped by nearly a quarter of a billion.

The overall picture shows some encouraging signs:

- A million more children survive every year.
- Two million people now receive AIDs treatment.
- There are 41 million more children in school.
- Two million lives are saved every year by immunization.
- Polio, leprosy and neonatal tetanus are on the verge of elimination.
- Some African economies have been showing strong growth.

But a considerable challenge remains:

- 72 million children are still not in school, and many who are, receive a poor quality education.
- Half of the developing world lacks basic sanitation. If current trends continue, the world is likely to miss the MDG sanitation target by almost 600 million people.
- Over half a million women still die each year from treatable and preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth. The odds that a sub-Saharan African woman will die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth are one in 16, compared to around one in 4,000 in the developed world.
- Over 33 million people are living with HIV, and more than one million people die of malaria every year, including one child every 30 seconds.
- Nearly one billion people still live on less than a dollar a day.

The gap between Africa and other regions of the developing world is large and challenging but it does not have to be discouraging. The success stories show that the combination of resources and commitment on the part of African governments and African peoples and their leaders, can make a huge difference.

Here are some recent examples:

- In Malawi, a voucher programme for fertilizers and seeds doubled agricultural productivity in just one year.
- Ghana is successfully implementing a national school feeding programme, using locally produced foods.
- Countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda abolished fees for primary schools, resulting in dramatic increases in enrolment.
- In 2006, Zambia cancelled fees for basic rural health services and Burundi introduced free medical care for mothers and children.
- National campaigns for measles vaccination have been launched. The distribution of insecticide-treated bed nets has halved malaria cases in some areas.
- In Niger, large-scale reforestation has improved livelihoods and reduced vulnerability to droughts.

So clearly, there is reason to be hopeful. A report published earlier this year by the MDG Africa Steering Group, made up of African leaders and key international organisations, concluded that the MDGs can still be achieved in Africa by 2015 – if the G8 nations honour their aid commitments.

Those commitments date back to the end of the 1960s, when the rich nations of the world got together to decide what would be a reasonable percentage of their incomes to devote to overseas development aid. They decided on the figure of 0.7 per cent. Today, nearly 40 years later, only five countries have met that target: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

The 0.7 per cent target for development aid was renewed at the UN International Conference on Financing Development in Monterrey, Mexico in 2002 but sadly, many governments still have a long way to go to go.

At a time when many countries in the developed world are experiencing an economic downturn and the threat of recession, there is another perception that has to be overcome: that ‘charity begins at home’ and that, at this time, governments simply cannot afford to increase overseas development aid.

But to put these concerns in perspective, let’s look at some of the costs involved...

- Basic schooling for every child would cost around ten billion dollars a year – that’s less than the USA spends on ice cream.
- Basic healthcare and nutrition would cost 13 billion dollars a year. That’s around two thirds of what Europe and the US spend on pet food.
- Making childbirth safer for all women would cost around 12 billion dollars a year. That’s what we currently spend on perfume in Europe and the US.

Government must have the courage to put their aid budgets back on track. But aid alone is not enough. It must go hand-in-hand with coherent and just policies on trade and debt.

International trade has the potential to lift millions of people out of poverty. But trade rules are stacked in favour of rich countries and multinational companies. It is estimated that poor countries lose out on more than two billion dollars a day as a result of unfair trade – 14 times what they receive in aid.

World trade rules have a huge financial impact on individual people in the world’s poorest countries, most of whom make their living from agriculture. Global poverty can only be ended if trade rules let the poor earn an honest wage, for an honest day’s work. Subsidies, tariffs and dumping currently prevent this from happening.

Significant progress has been made on debt cancellation since the Jubilee Debt Campaign, but many of the poorest African countries are still saddled with heavy debt burdens. We must ensure that the remaining debts of these countries are cancelled so

that the money they would have spent on debt repayments can be redirected to health, education and poverty reduction.

I would now like to turn to two other pressing issues on the 21st century agenda that are inextricably linked to global poverty and have the potential to wipe out all the progress we have made on poverty eradication: Climate change and violent conflict.

Climate change is now a reality. Last year, Mexico had the worst floods for 50 years, and huge swathes of Africa, from the Atlantic seaboard to the Indian Ocean, were under water. More recently, we have seen the devastating effects of flooding in India, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, and tropical storms in Haiti. Out of 40 humanitarian emergency appeals launched last year from Caritas Internationalis, 28 were climate-related.

Rising sea levels, violent storms, floods, drought, encroaching deserts, diminishing supplies of glacier water and erratic weather patterns will have the greatest impacts on people living in poverty in developing countries, who are least able to adapt. In countries with high poverty rates and weak capacities of adaptation, climate change is increasing their vulnerability – and the poorest are the first victims of floods, droughts and famines.

The links between climate change and violent conflict are particularly worrying. Increasing pressures on natural resources – in particular, water – coupled with food shortages and crop failures as a result of floods, droughts and shorter growing seasons, are putting additional strain on fragile social and political systems. For example, drought has been identified as one of the factors contributing towards the conflict in Darfur, where fighting broke out between farmers and herders after the rains failed and water became scarce. In the ensuing conflict, 200,000 people have died and several million have fled their homes.

Water stress already affects 20 per cent of the world's population and according to projections by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, this figure will rise.

Conflict reduces peoples' capacity to adapt to climate change, producing a vicious circle that worsens poverty and hampers development efforts. Campaigns to tackle climate change must therefore be linked to development, and to emergency humanitarian work. International cooperation on mitigating the effects of climate change, through reducing carbon emissions, need to be accompanied by funding and assistance to enable vulnerable states to adapt to these effects.

It is estimated that adaptation to climate change in developing countries will cost at least 50 billion dollars each year. Calculated on ability to pay, and by their historic contribution to climate change, the USA, European Union, Japan, Canada, and Australia should contribute over 95 per cent of the finance needed. This money must, however, be in addition to existing commitments to development aid.

The link between conflict and poverty has been widely recognised, but efforts to address the problem tend to be mainly in the context of the fight against global terrorism. There are many conflicts that may not directly threaten Western security, but that also need our attention.

More than 30 armed conflicts are raging in the world today and in Sub-Saharan Africa more than a third of the population lives under some form of armed conflict. Violent conflict undermines development and can set it back decades. More than a trillion dollars every year goes on military spending – money that could otherwise be spent on health, education and other poverty alleviation programmes.

More needs to be done to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace in developing countries. Conflicts can flare up again when the root causes have not been addressed and there has been no sustained development effort following on from the cessation of hostilities. Sustainable peace means more than the absence of violence – it means a continued commitment to long-term development.

When you look at the complex inter-relations between globalisation, poverty and climate change, it seems obvious that only a concerted, coordinated, multi-lateral effort can address these issues. As the agenda for today's event states: "Global challenges require global solutions".

If the MDGs are to be met, cooperation between governments, the private sector, NGOs and civil society is essential. In particular, faith-based organisations such as Caritas, have an important role. In many African countries the Catholic Church is the primary, if not the only, healthcare and education provider. Schools, hospitals and other vital infrastructure provided by Catholic and other faith-based organisations are second to none, but international donors are not taking full advantage of this valuable resource as a conduit to deliver aid.

The World Health Organisation estimates that between 30 and 70 per cent of the health infrastructure in Africa is currently owned by faith-based organisations, but there is often little support for these organisations from mainstream public health programmes. One-fifth of all organisations engaged in HIV programming are faith-based, but they receive just two per cent of international funding.

In addition to delivering development programmes on the ground through our member organisations, Caritas gives a high priority to advocacy at an international level, with delegations to the United Nations in New York and Geneva.

CI has also taken part in campaigning for action on the MDGs at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the G8 summit in Hokkaido, Japan and the Accra Aid Effectiveness Forum in Ghana.

CI's UN delegate Joe Donnelly was in Japan as part of the NGO/Civil Society challenge to governments on their lack of implementation of aid commitments. And as Head of the CI Delegation in New York, Joe also chairs the MDG-NGO Convening Group, which works closely with the UN Millennium Development Campaign and UN Development Programme, NGO networks and UN member state representatives.

Last December, Cardinal Rodriguez and I attended a working lunch meeting with G8 and other Ambassadors to the Holy See in support of the 'Call to Action' on the MDGs launched by the UK government. The meeting was hosted by the British

Ambassador to the Holy See and provided an important opportunity to stress the need for governments to work with civil society and faith-based organisations if the MDGs are to be achieved.

In addition to campaigning on the MDGs, Caritas has specialist advocacy coordinators on climate change, migration and trafficking, and HIV/AIDS.

The role of organisations such as Caritas and JPIC in advocacy and campaigning is another topic we might usefully discuss. Should we be involved in these kind of activities? I firmly believe we should, but I know there are those who believe that Church should not be involved in politics and in seeking to influence governments; we should feed the hungry and cure the sick, but not asking why they are hungry and sick in the first place. How can we respond to that sort of argument? And how far can we legitimately go in trying to change our governments and international institutions?

I am sure that today's event will have made a vital contribution to broadening our understanding of these complex issues and strengthening our resolve to address them. I think the key message for me is that the challenges currently confronting us require an unprecedented degree of cooperation on a global scale. Organisations such as ours need to explore new ways to work together and to inspire the participation of all of humanity – to forge the future together, as one people.

I would like now to recap on some of the key questions I have raised during this talk and to hear your opinions.

Unfortunately, I have to fly back to Rome this afternoon, but I hope that at the end of the day you will feel that we have taken a few steps forward together. I would like to thank you again for this opportunity to contribute to today's discussions and I wish you every success in your future work.

Maybe I will have the opportunity to welcome some of you to Rome in the future – and who knows, maybe one day we will even be able to enjoy a cup of coffee with a clear conscience!

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27<sup>th</sup> September 2008