

## **Statement of Catholic Church-Inspired Organizations Related to Decent Work and the Post-2015 Development Agenda**

13. June 2013

As a contribution to the discussion of the post-2015 development framework, we, Catholic Church-inspired organizations<sup>1</sup> re-affirm that the most effective route out of poverty and the ongoing global economic crisis is closely linked to the promotion of decent work and support for adequate social protection. Therefore, we confidently affirm that “human work is a key, probably the essential key, to the whole social question, if we try to see that question really from the point of view of man's good.”<sup>2</sup>

We acknowledge the challenges confronting humankind living in a globalized world as it struggles to cope with limited resources, to develop and promote opportunities for sustainable livelihood, and to build peace.

We believe that poverty eradication is the responsibility of and requires concerted commitments from governments, employers and workers organizations, the private sector and civil society; commitments that are grounded in human dignity, human rights and responsibilities, and solidarity.

With long and widespread experience in in the private sector as well as in practical programming and policy-making activity worldwide, from the grassroots to global levels, often in direct partnership with States, international organizations and other civil society organizations, we offer this paper as a contribution to the global reflection and discussion on the post-2015 Development Agenda.

We call upon and support the international community in its efforts to renew the commitment of the entire human family to poverty eradication through the promotion of decent work, good quality jobs and social protection, for all workers in all sectors of the economy, including the informal economy. We express particular concern about the situation of young people and migrants who, despite being an important part of the solution to the economic crisis, face more acute and difficult challenges in this regard.

We support the International Labour Organization (ILO) effort to include the decent work agenda within the post-2015 framework, reflecting and animating the principles expressed in the ILO Declaration of Philadelphia (1944) which states that labour is not a commodity. Notably, this principle had already been articulated in 1931 in the Papal Encyclical

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<sup>1</sup> This statement was prepared by a Working Group with representation from the following Catholic Church-inspired organizations: Caritas Internationalis, Kolping International/German Commission for Justice and Peace, World Movement of Christian Workers (MMTC-WMCW-WBCA), International Union of Christian Business Executives (UNIAPAC), International Coordination of Young Christian Workers (CIJOC – ICYCW), Pax Romana and its affiliated members (SIIAEC), International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), International Young Christian Workers (IYCW-JOCI), Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the UN and other International Organisation in Geneva, Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace

<sup>2</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1981,  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_14091981\\_laborem-exercens\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens_en.html)

*Quadragesimo Anno*<sup>3</sup>, which is an essential component of Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church.

Promoting work as a means of eradicating poverty should not be viewed as an issue that could be compromised. Jobs quantity cannot be detrimental to jobs quality; work must be decent. For work to be decent, it must be "work that expresses the essential dignity of every man and woman in the context of their particular society".<sup>4</sup>

It is the duty and responsibility of all stakeholders involved in the world of work to cooperate toward achieving this goal with a true spirit of justice and fairness. When all stakeholders are engaged, this commitment is a source of hope.

However, in today's globalised world the work is increasingly informal, precarious and unprotected. Neither employment goals nor profit margins—for employers, companies and economies—should be detrimental to working conditions. Human Beings are not "commodities".

We call all policy-makers and enterprises, private and public, to consider the human dignity of workers, their talent, labour and families, enabling them to better fulfil their human vocation in their workplace

We also call upon the international community to extend the four pillars of the (ILO) decent work agenda--employment, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue to all workers, including those in the informal economy.

### **Extending social protection**

All persons and organizations must assume their respective responsibilities in exercising needed actions to protect and advance to the common good. The extension of social protection is a fundamental means to accomplish solidarity within and across society. Social protection mechanisms are essential to eradicate poverty, as they protect workers and their families from risks of life, such as unemployment and illness.

Weak social protection systems<sup>5</sup> need consolidation. Social protection floors as defined by the ILO recommendations<sup>6</sup> are powerful tools to expand protection to cover all workers,

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<sup>3</sup> "Labor... is not a mere commodity. On the contrary, the worker's human dignity in it must be recognized. It therefore cannot be bought and sold like a commodity". Pope Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno*, no 83, 1931, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/pius\\_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-xi\\_enc\\_19310515\\_quadragesimo-anno\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/pius_xi/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_19310515_quadragesimo-anno_en.html)

<sup>4</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 63, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html)

Decent work is "work that is freely chosen, effectively associating workers, both men and women, with the development of their community; work that enables the worker to be respected and free from any form of discrimination; work that makes it possible for families to meet their needs and provide schooling for their children, without the children themselves being forced into labour; work that permits the workers to organize themselves freely, and to make their voices heard; work that leaves enough room for rediscovering one's roots at a personal, familial and spiritual level; work that guarantees those who have retired a decent standard of living". (*Caritas in Veritate*, 63)

<sup>5</sup> "The current economic processes have led to a downsizing of social security systems as the price to be paid for seeking greater competitive advantage in the global market, with consequent grave danger for the rights of

families and communities. We urge that special attention be paid to decent work and social protection for youth and migrant workers.

### **Special concern for youth and employment**

In today's world, young people, especially those living in rural areas and working in the informal economy, are facing difficulties in the world of work. The young generation is holding many professional skills. Many young people work without contracts, or with part time contracts and precarious salaries. A larger number of them is unemployed. "It is particularly painful when it especially affects young people, who after appropriate cultural, technical and professional preparation fail to find work, and see their sincere wish to work and their readiness to take on their own responsibility for the economic and social development of the community sadly frustrated." (Laborem Exercens #18). In addition, many young people pay very high fees for university education and vocational training, indebting themselves at a young age, yet jobs are not readily available.

Many of the new generation are losing hope for the future and thus risk the loss of fundamental values. "Many young people today seriously question whether life is something good, and have a hard time finding their way."<sup>7</sup>

We call upon all governments, workers and employers organizations, as well as civil society organizations to work with youth movements and youth representatives to ensure a secure and meaningful future for the young generations. Young people should be ensured access to work and should enjoy decent working conditions and social protection, including when leaving schools and entering the labour force. A careful analysis and reform of education systems is to be carried out to ensure a smooth transition from school to work. Business leaders have an important responsibility to engage and accompany the younger generation in this transition.

### **Special concern for migrant workers and their families**

In addition to being a right, migration is a natural human strategy to fight poverty. According to the ILO, 90% of today's international migrants, many of whom are young, are workers or family members of migrants who have moved principally for economic reasons, i.e., to work. Migrant work and earnings make a substantial contribution to positive development and the reduction of poverty both in countries where migrants work as well as in their countries of origin. Migration, as a positive driving force for social development, is a critical challenge and has yet to be addressed adequately. However, many millions of migrants, moving within their regions or across continents, and including significant numbers of farmworkers and domestic

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workers, for fundamental human rights and for the solidarity associated with the traditional forms of the social State. Systems of social security can lose the capacity to carry out their task, both in emerging countries and in those that were among the earliest to develop, as well as in poor countries" (*Caritas in Veritate*, P25)

<sup>6</sup>Social protection floors are "defined sets of basic social security guarantees which secure protection aimed at preventing or alleviating poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion" (*ILO Social Protection Floors Resolution*, No 202, 2012)

<sup>7</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Message for 28<sup>th</sup> World Youth Day 2013, 18 October 2012, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/messages/youth/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_mes\\_20121018\\_youth\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/youth/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20121018_youth_en.html)

workers whether documented or undocumented, are subjected to working conditions that are profoundly indecent.<sup>8</sup>.

We call upon governments, employers and workers organisations and civil society to work together to ensure that all migrant workers and their families benefit from the same rights and assume the same responsibilities in the country where they live as any other worker. Specific attention is to be paid to fundamental principles and rights at work as well as to the provision of adequate, fair, and portable social protection, at levels that conform to universal human rights and international labour standards. Failure to do so undermines labour markets, public health, social cohesion and public order. Social protection for migrants means better protection for peaceful living together in the entire society.

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<sup>8</sup> “Institutions in host countries must keep careful watch to prevent the spread of the temptation to exploit foreign labourers, denying them the same rights enjoyed by nationals, rights that are to be guaranteed to all without discrimination. Regulating immigration according to criteria of equity and balance is one of the indispensable conditions for ensuring that immigrants are integrated into society with the guarantees required by recognition of their human dignity. Immigrants are to be received as persons and helped, together with their families, to become a part of societal life. In this context, the right of reuniting families should be respected and promoted. At the same time, conditions that foster increased work opportunities in people's place of origin are to be promoted as much as possible,” from Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 2004, #298.  
[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/justpeace/documents/rc\\_pc\\_justpeace\\_doc\\_20060526\\_compendio-dott-soc\\_en.html#Immigration%20and%20work](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html#Immigration%20and%20work)