



Commissioner Karmenu VELLA
Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

**Papal Audience with EU Ministers for Environment and
Commissioners on "Laudato Si"**

16 September 2015
10:00h
[9:00 according to invitation letter by LU /IT]

Auletta of the Aula Paolo VI
Vatican City

Member of Cabinet responsible: Lanfranco FANTI
Member accompanying:
DG participant(s):
(including contact number(s))

KEY MESSAGES

- I am impressed by the **all-encompassing extent of the Encyclical** in terms of environmental challenges you mention and lines of action you propose.
- I welcome your words on the natural environment being "a **collective good**, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone". I fully agree with you that there is a close relationship between environmental challenges, and social and human issues.
- Many of the topics you refer to lie at the very heart of what we are trying to achieve with **EU environmental policies**, together with Member States, regions, citizens and businesses in the EU.
- 'Laudato Si' was referred to often in the final discussions on the **Sustainable Development Goals**. The final outcome is a significant step forward as it charts a path towards sustainability for the world, with clear responsibilities for all countries.

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INTRODUCTION

SCENE SETTER

His Holiness Pope Francis has recently voiced his opinion on consumerism and irresponsible development, environmental degradation and climate change through his second Encyclical “Laudato si’ - On care for our common home”. The strong stance of His Holiness in linking sustainable development and the fight against poverty has nurtured discussion all over the world and his words could create a positive momentum on the way to COP21.

President Juncker replied to the Encyclical on 28 July, referring to the (then proposed) Sustainable Development Goals and the climate change negotiations in December. President Juncker hoped that the Encyclical would serve as a wake-up call and encourage people to address our common future.

At the initiative of the Italian government and in light of “Laudato si’ - On care for our common home”, His Holiness has accepted to meet all the 28 Ministers of Environment and Climate of the European Union, Commissioner Arias Cañete and you for a high level exchange of views as well as a chance to show the European Union’s commitment to reach a global agreement in Paris next December.

OBJECTIVES

- To show the EU’s commitment to improve the state of our environment for current and future generations;
- To explain further that the EU has strong policies in areas such as sustainable consumption and production and biodiversity protection, and is about to adopt a new package on the circular economy;
- To highlight the EU's support for the Sustainable Development Goals as a transformative agenda to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development globally, and our commitment to reflect both ambition and transformation in our implementation of the goals within the EU and with partner countries.
- To recall that more can be done by the Vatican itself to address illegal trade in timber and ivory as well as endangered species (the latter via CITES).

SPEAKING POINTS

- I am impressed by the **all-encompassing extent of the Encyclical** in terms of the environmental challenges you mention and Lines of Action you propose.
- I not only welcome your words on the natural environment being "*a **collective good**, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone*"¹, but I also fully agree with you that there is a close relationship between environmental challenges, and social and human issues.
- Many of the topics you refer are at the very heart of what we are trying to achieve with **EU environmental policies**, together with Member States, regions, citizens and businesses in the EU. From pollution to air quality, from access to water to biodiversity and the importance to move towards a circular economy, Her Holiness, we have many common goals. Let me give a few examples:
 - Both the EU citizens and people globally continue to suffer from poor air quality. Air pollution continues to cause around 400 000 premature deaths in the EU each year and around 3.7 million worldwide. Millions of people suffer from respiratory and cardiovascular diseases due to air pollution which constraints their normal daily activities. If

¹ NB this and following "*quotes*" are from the Encyclical

we don't take measures, outdoor air pollution is projected to become the top cause of environmentally related deaths worldwide in 2050. A Clean Air Package that is to reduce health impacts in the EU by more than half is therefore one of the main initiatives that I am overseeing during my mandate.

- 'Laudato Si' was referred to often in the final discussions on the **Sustainable Development Goals**. The final outcome is a significant step forward as it charts a path towards sustainability for the world, with clear responsibilities for all countries. I take one example which is to me very telling: Sustainable Development Goal 6 aims to "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all". Without water there is no life for humans or nature and often conflicts are generated by the attempt to control water resources. Therefore, sustainable water management can give a major contribution to building peace, based on transboundary cooperation modelled, for instance, on what we have developed through the EU Water Framework Directive.
- To move away from the "*throw-away culture*" that you rightly condemn, the EU wants to transform itself into a **Circular Economy**. At the end of 2015, the European Commission will publish a package of measures to promote a

"circular model of producing", reducing waste and enhancing recycling, including of nutrients. We support consumption models that favour "sharing" over "owning". Such efforts will help reduce and eventually reverse the excessive pressure on our planet's natural resources and to avoid our home from looking *"like an immense pile of filth"*.

- The EU is committed to halting **biodiversity** loss within the EU by 2020 and the EU's Birds and Habitats Directives, which are the core of the EU nature legislation, have been instrumental in preserving species and **protecting habitats**. For example, over the last 25 years the EU has built up a vast network of protected areas, Natura 2000, amounting to 18% of the EU's land area.
- The EU is also cognisant of its shared responsibility to help address global challenges, and reduce the **impacts of EU activities outside its own borders**. As an example, the EU prohibits the placing on the market of illegally-logged timber. All states, including the Holy See, should follow this example in order to render such measures most effective.
- You highlight some **positive examples of global action**, among them CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), to which we hope the Holy See will sign up, for instance, by addressing the issue of ivory trafficking. Likewise, we hope the Holy See

will become a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

- In order to implement this agenda, the EU is committed to reflect these goals and targets in its external policies and its relations with its partners. Internally, we already have much in place to help us achieve these goals, but the ambitious and transformative nature of the SDGs will require the EU to deliver a beyond “business as usual” response.

DEFENSIVE POINTS

How does the EU propose to respond to the challenges and lines of action put forward in the Encyclical?

The EU is deeply committed to sustainability and environmental protection, but also to good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law. These goals and principles are enshrined in our legislation and guide our daily endeavours. In recent years they have been reflected in ambitious European Union legislative and non-legislative initiatives on energy and climate change; sustainable consumption and production; the circular economy; and biodiversity protection; amongst others.

In terms of EU action in particular policy fields [*NB complementing those already mentioned in speaking points:*]

- EU Policies on **air quality** have contributed to considerable improvements in air quality over the past decades. Of course challenges remain as we are still facing significant numbers of premature deaths every year caused by air pollution, and we are currently revising key pieces of air quality legislation.
- The EU has a whole set of **water**-related legislation in place to protect the quality of its drinking water, and improve the management of rivers and other water bodies. Freshwater quality has much improved over the last 25 years, but more remains to be done, for which we rely on public participation and cross-border cooperation through river basin management plans.

It is also important to mention the first European Citizens' Initiative on the issue of access to and quality of drinking water (the Righ2Water Initiative). The Commission believes that not only access, also the quality of drinking water has to be seen as a human right and a condition for equal living conditions in Europe. The European Union will ensure its legislation guarantees safe and healthy drinking water (e.g. through the review of the Drinking Water Directive).

- Likewise, we have ambitious legislation for **marine waters**, to achieve their Good Environmental Status by 2020 and to protect the resource base upon which marine-related economic and social activities depend. This includes tackling marine litter with close links to EU legislation on waste.
- We recognise the importance of healthy **soils**. While there is no comprehensive set of rules in the EU for soils, existing EU policies in areas such as agriculture, water, and waste, contribute to the protection of soils.
- EU legislation requires ensuring that plans, programmes and projects likely to have significant effects on the environment are subject to an **environmental assessment**, prior to their approval or authorisation. Consultation with the public is a key feature of environmental assessment procedures.
- You rightly refer to **climate change** as "one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day". In the run-up to the Paris summit at the end of the year, the EU pursues its vision for an ambitious, global agreement as my colleague Commissioner Arias Cañete can elaborate on.

Does the EU consider revising its growth model, recognising that often "*people's quality of life actually diminishes – by the deterioration of the environment, the low quality of food or the depletion of resources – in the midst of economic growth*"?

Europe has experienced a financial and economic crisis over the last years that has left many European citizens worse off. The crisis has had a number of worrying social impacts, such as high levels of youth unemployment and increased social vulnerability.

The European Commission's overarching priority is therefore to bring back jobs and growth to Europe. But, we also want to maintain social cohesion and to ensure that the benefits of growth are widely enjoyed.

This view of balanced growth that is good for all is at the heart of the Europe 2020 strategy, launched in 2010 as the basis for sustainable growth in the EU. This strategy goes beyond mere economic development and encompasses wider dimensions, such as resource efficiency, climate and energy. We also recognise that progress should not be measured by GDP alone, and so the Commission is continuing its work on developing indicators and composite indices to complement GDP through its "Beyond GDP" initiative.

Humanitarian crises and wars in the Middle East and elsewhere have increased the number of those seeking refuge in the EU. Desertification and the impacts of climate change will be felt increasingly in those parts of the world that already now suffer from floods, water scarcity and other hazards. How will the EU handle and be able to accommodate an increasing number of environmental migrants in the future?

The EU recognises the need to address the environmental drivers of migration, most notably water scarcity and land degradation, which are significant causes for people to move from rural areas in particular and seek improved living conditions elsewhere. The EU is tackling these issues through funding for programmes to support sustainable agriculture, including climate-smart agriculture and more efficient water management in affected countries and where possible to reverse the trend of land degradation through sustainable land management, including re-forestation.

In relation to the wars in the Middle East, the EU is currently modifying its policy towards its Neighbours (European Neighbourhood Policy); Migration will most probably be a priority area for cooperation with a special emphasis on addressing the root causes of migration, including environmental drivers. We already have specific funding programmes aimed at restoring the ecosystems that constitute the main sources of livelihood for communities around the Mediterranean, in particular the Initiative for a cleaner Mediterranean by the year 2020, and that promote the sustainable management of water resources. We also support Mediterranean communities to switch to more sustainable consumption and production practices and to adapt to climate change. The EU has committed for the next two years almost €700 million between bilateral and regional support on programmes that directly or indirectly address environmental and climate change issues. Our environment programmes in the Mediterranean also provide a platform for dialogue in conflict areas (Israel and Palestine) to bring people together.

The EU will also continue providing substantial support to communities hosting large numbers of refugees in the Middle East, such as Jordan (€160 million)² and Lebanon (€250 million),³ to increase their resilience, ensure long-term sustainability and prevent further environmental degradation. The EU support acknowledges the additional pressure of the massive influx of refugees on the already fragile environment of those countries, particularly in relation to management of water and waste-water, solid waste management, air quality, land use and ecosystems. In post-conflict areas, the EU also contributes to environmental restoration (e.g., soil de-contamination, land restoration, water de-pollution) to pave the way to economic recovery.

² Since the beginning of the conflict

³ Since the beginning of the conflict

Does the Commission plan a revised Sustainable Development Strategy?

At the end of this month, at the 70th UN General Assembly in New York, we will formally adopt the new global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Once adopted, these goals will provide a useful framework for the EU's work on sustainable development. We will soon start work to frame their implementation at EU level, in line with our Communication adopted in February on the post-2015 agenda that sets out the overarching implementation principles.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Encyclical

The encyclical letter "**Laudato si' of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, on care for our Common Home**"⁴ was published on 18 June 2015. It has provoked wide media attention, already following the publication of a leaked document a couple of days earlier. The Encyclical is an extensive document in size and in its coverage of topics relating to the environment but also to the economic the financial system and the social consequences of environmental deterioration. In six chapters, Pope Francis

1. sets out the environmental challenges the Earth is facing (*What is happening to our common home*) incl. in areas in the competence of DG ENV, such as biodiversity loss, water in particular access to clean drinking water globally, (excessive) resource use, air pollution and its health impacts, soil and its degradation through unsustainable agricultural techniques, the (un)sustainability of cities, the benefits from and protection of forests, woodlands and wetlands, but also climate change and excessive consumption of energy;
2. explains why believers of the Christian religion (and other religions) should care about environmental degradation (*The gospel of creation*);
3. explains *the human roots of the ecological crisis*, lamenting that "modern anthropocentrism has ended up prizing technical thought over reality" and recalls that "in order to continue providing employment, it is imperative to promote an economy which favours productive diversity and business creativity";
4. puts forward his concept of *Integral ecology* that links environmental challenges to their economic (growth), social and cultural dimension and recalls the need to consider all of these to attain the "common good", while being just to future generations;
5. proposes *Lines of approach and action*, lauding the global ecological movement and several international negotiations (he mentions as positive examples the Basel Convention, CITES, Montreal Protocol, whereas less progress has been achieved on climate change and biodiversity conventions) and, in the context of ocean governance and marine litter, calling for "an agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of so-called 'global commons'". He also asks us "to grow in the conviction that a decrease in the pace of production and consumption can at times give rise to another form of progress and development". He points out that "environmental impact assessment should not come after the drawing up of a business proposition or the proposal of a particular policy, plan or programme. It should be part of the process from the beginning, and be carried out in a way which is interdisciplinary, transparent and free of all economic or political pressure".
6. and finally closes by pointing out that "change is impossible without motivation and a process of education" (*Ecological education and spirituality*). The aim should be to pursue "a new lifestyle". He points out the power consumers have through their choices in "changing the way businesses operate, forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production".

⁴ http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html. Detailed summary available from the Vatican Information Service: http://www.vis.va/vissolr/index.php?vi=all&dl=33552f9d-0789-2072-0012-5582b6e1d60b&dl_t=text/xml&dl_a=y&ul=1&ev=1.

Towards the SDGs

The Encyclical can also claim to have left its mark on the SDG negotiations. The first draft of the post-2015 outcome document was released on 2 June. The Commission's assessment of this was that the environmental dimension was very weak. At the first discussion of this draft (22 June), the co-facilitators of the negotiations referenced the Encyclical in their opening statement. In subsequent drafts the environmental dimension was much improved.

The final outcome document "Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" was informally agreed by UN Member States on 2 August and will be adopted by Heads of State at a Summit 25-27 September. This is the product of over two years of informal negotiations and contains 17 goals and 169 targets to tackle poverty and put the world on a path to sustainable development. The final goals are:

- Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*
- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

* Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

The Holy See and CITES and the CBD

The Holy See is not a Party to CITES. This has raised criticisms from some media that the Vatican does not have the adequate tools to deal with trade in religious items made of ivory products and make sure that they are not of illegal origin. In view of the current surge in wildlife trafficking and in line with the support shown in the Encyclical for CITES, the accession of the Holy See to CITES would be an important symbolic gesture and the best way to dispel any doubts on the role of the Vatican with illegal ivory trade.

Concerning the CBD, there are only two countries missing, the Holy See and the USA, to make it the first 'universal' convention.

Briefing prepared by:



ANNEX I

CV OF POPE FRANCIS



Jorge Mario Bergoglio was born in Buenos Aires on 17 December 1936, the son of Italian immigrants. He graduated as a chemical technician and then chose the path of the priesthood. He was ordained for the Jesuits on 13 December 1969 during his theological studies at the Theological Faculty of San Miguel. He was novice master in San Miguel, where he also taught theology. He was Provincial for Argentina (1973-1979) and rector of the Philosophical and Theological Faculty of San Miguel (1980-1986). After completing his doctoral dissertation in Germany, he served as a confessor and spiritual director in Córdoba.

On 20 May 1992 he was appointed titular Bishop of Auca and Auxiliary of Buenos Aires, receiving episcopal consecration on 27 June. On 3 June 1997 he was appointed Coadjutor Archbishop of Buenos Aires and succeeded Cardinal Antonio Quarracino on 28 February 1998. He is also Ordinary for Eastern-rite faithful in Argentina who lack an Ordinary of their own rite. Three years later at the Consistory of 21 February 2001, John Paul II created him Cardinal, assigning him the title of San Roberto Bellarmino. He served as President of the Bishops' Conference of Argentina from 8 November 2005 until 8 November 2011.

As Archbishop of Buenos Aires — a diocese with more than three million inhabitants — he conceived of a missionary project based on communion and evangelization. He had four main goals: open and brotherly communities, an informed laity playing a lead role, evangelization efforts addressed to every inhabitant of the city, and assistance to the poor and the sick. In September 2009 he launched the solidarity campaign for the bicentenary of the Independence of the country. Two hundred charitable agencies are to be set up by 2016.

He was elected Supreme Pontiff on 13 March 2013.

Sources:

<http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/biography/documents/papa-francesco-biografia-bergoglio.html>; and

http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/documentazione/documents/cardinali_biografie/cardinali_bio_bergoglio_jm_en.html

ANNEX II LETTER PRESIDENT JUNCKER TO POPE FRANCIS

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Jean-Claude JUNCKER
President of the European Commission

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Brussels, 28.07.2015
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Your Holiness,

I would like to thank you for your Encyclical 'Laudato si'. This is a clarion call for reflection and action. It reminds us that our planet "is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone".

In September this year, the global community is set to take decisions on an agenda to poverty eradication and sustainable development. This December, the focus will turn to the negotiations for an agreement on climate change, which, as you so rightly state, is one of the principal challenges facing humanity.

I have great hope that 'Laudato si' will serve as a wake-up call and encourage people to address our common future. Action will be required on the part of states – both developing and developed – but also by businesses, citizens and local authorities.

For our part, the European Union is committed to play its part. We have taken and will take initiatives on areas such as energy and climate; sustainable consumption and production; biodiversity protection; and the circular economy. However, more remains to be done and we will be considering how best to ensure that the new Sustainable Development Goals do not remain dead letter in the EU and globally.

Humankind needs to assume its shared responsibility for the future of our planet, which is our common home, and therefore welcome your call for a meaningful conversation on this fundamental theme. In this spirit, and following up on our meeting in Strasbourg last year, I would welcome the continuation of the dialogue with you on these issues, with a view to better understanding the problems we face and identifying the most promising solutions.

The Commission also looks forward to continuing the dialogue on these issues with the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community under Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

I have the honour to remain Your Holiness' loyal and devoted friend.



His Holiness, Pope Francis