



Commissioner Karmenu VELLA
Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries

**Meeting with His Excellency Monsignor Lebeaupin,
Apostolic Nuncio to the EU**

7 December 2015 – 15H30

Brussels

Member of Cabinet responsible: Gabriella PACE
Member accompanying: Gabriella Pace
DG participant: 

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KEY MESSAGES

- The **Encyclical's all-embracing nature** is very timely.
- I welcome the natural environment being seen as "a **collective good**", the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone". I fully agree that there is a close relationship between environmental challenges, and social and human issues.
- Many of the topics referred to in the text lie at the very heart of what we are trying to achieve. The EU is deeply committed to sustainability and environmental protection and together with our Member States, we work to provide our citizens with a clean and healthy environment.
- The EU has also taken a consistent leadership in the full range of international initiatives addressing global environment and sustainability challenges.
- 'Laudato Si' was often referred to in the final discussions on the **Sustainable Development Goals**. The 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

You are meeting His Excellency Monsignor Lebeauvin, the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union. The discussion will focus on the 'Laudato Si' and relations with the Holy See.

His Holiness Pope Francis has 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 have helped in creating momentum on the road to COP21.

President Juncker replied to the Encyclical on 28 July, referring to the 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 met you, Commissioner Arias Cañete and the EU's 28 Ministers of Environment and Climate on 16 September in the Vatican City for a high level exchange of views. In his address, the Pope underlined the need for environmental policies to follow three key principles: solidarity, justice and participation.

The High Representative and Vice-President Mogherini met Mons. Lebeauvin on 22 July in Brussels when they agreed to establish a more structured form of cooperation on two main priority areas: Latin America and Caribbean, and sustainable development within the context of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

You may wish to emphasise the EU's commitment to environmental protection and to the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. As regards international commitment (MEAs), you should encourage support 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 in illegal ivory trade.

OBJECTIVES

- To underline the EU's commitment to improve the state of our environment for current and future generations.
- To explain that the EU has strong policies in place and has just adopted a new circular economy package.
- To highlight the EU's support for the Sustainable Development Goals as a transformative agenda to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development globally, and the EU's commitment to the implementation of the goals within the EU and with partner countries.
- To encourage the Vatican to play a role by showing support for Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) (e.g. CITES, by addressing the issue of ivory trafficking).

SPEAKING POINTS

- I am impressed by the **all-embracing nature of the Encyclical** in terms of the environmental challenges and Lines of Action.
- I welcome that the natural environment is seen as "*a **collective good**, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone*"¹. I fully agree with you that there is a close relationship between environmental challenges, and social and human issues.
- Many of the topics referred to lie at the very heart of what we are trying to achieve with the **EU's environment policy**, where together with Member States, regions, citizens and businesses we are working to improve the environment for Europe's citizens.
- In terms of EU action in particular policy fields, our **air quality** policy has contributed to considerable improvements in air quality over the past decades.
- 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.

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

- We also 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.
- The EU is also 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.
- To move away from the "*throw-away culture*" that His Holiness rightly condemns, the EU wants to transform itself into a **Circular Economy**. The European Commission has just put forward a package of measures to promote a "*circular model of producing*", reducing waste and enhancing recycling. 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.
- This new Circular Economy strategy includes a legislative proposal on waste recycling targets and an action plan covering the whole life cycle of products and materials - from

their design and production - to consumption and re-use or recycling.

- The shift to a Circular Economy will never come about as a result of legislation alone. We need the support and commitment of business and other stakeholders. Voluntary instruments (such as eco-labelling) will also play an important role in disseminating good practices.
- The EU is also cognisant of its shared responsibility to help address global challenges, and reduce the **impact of EU activities outside its own borders**. As an example, the EU prohibits the placing on the market of illegally-logged timber.
- Some **positive examples of global action are referred to in the 'Laudato Si'**, among them CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora), where we would welcome the Holy See's support for instance, in addressing the issue of ivory trafficking. We also hope that the Holy See will become a Party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- 'Laudato Si' was referred to in the final discussions on the Sustainable Development Goals. The outcome is a significant step forward as it charts a path towards sustainability. It provides the ambitious result that we were seeking with integrated, universal and transformational SDGs

at its core, fully integrating the three dimensions of sustainable development.

- For this, it is important that the climate conference (COP 21) taking place at the moment in Paris is a success. A top priority for the EU and its Member States this year securing an ambitious, global, legally binding agreement, effective at keeping the world on track for the agreed objective of limiting the increase in global temperatures to below 2 degrees,
- The agreement should help accelerate the transition to low-carbon, climate-resilient societies and as such will be a very important pillar of a broader sustainable development agenda the international community has been working on this year. The EU believes that a multilateral approach, based on common rules, is the best way to meet this objective and ensure Paris is a success.
- In order to implement the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, the EU is committed to reflect the goals and targets in its external policies and in its relations with key 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

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 recent 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. We also want to maintain social cohesion and 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. 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 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 can result in people moving from rural areas in particular to 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.

We have specific funding programmes to support communities around the Mediterranean, in particular the Initiative for a cleaner Mediterranean by the year 2020, and programmes 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.

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. The EU acknowledges the additional pressure of the large influx of refugees on the 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

² Since the beginning of the conflict

³ Since the beginning of the conflict

also contributes to environmental restoration (e.g., soil de-contamination, land restoration, water de-pollution) to pave the way to economic recovery.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The relations between the EU and the Holy See

The High Representative and Vice President Mogherini met the Papal Nuncio to the EU, H.E. Mons. Lebeaupin on 22 July in Brussels when they agreed to establish a more structured form of cooperation on two main priority areas: Latin America and Caribbean and sustainable development within the context of the UN 2030 Agenda.

The Holy See has been very active on the international scene since Pope Francis took office, taking initiatives and making statements on the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Belarus, migration, inter-religious dialogue and terrorism, among others. Pope Francis' mediation between the USA and Cuba played a significant role in putting these countries on the path to reconciliation. The Pope is also strongly engaged in tackling **global challenges**, including poverty, environmental degradation (publication of Encyclical *Laudato Si'* in June) and migration.

Mons. Lebeaupin regularly facilitates meetings between senior clerics from around the world and EU officials. Prior to the arrival of Mons. Lebeaupin in 2012, there were few institutional contacts between the Nunciature and the EU for a number of reasons, such as misperceptions on both sides and disappointment on the part of the Holy See regarding certain EU developments (such as the lack of an explicit reference to Christian values in the Lisbon Treaty).

Pope Francis paid his first official visit to the European Parliament (and the EU) in Strasburg in Nov 2014, the first Pontiff to do so since Pope Jean-Paul II in 1988. This was a strong signal of the importance that the Holy See attaches to its relations with the EU.

The EU has concluded a **Revised Monetary Agreement** with the Vatican City State on the use of the euro as its official currency. The EU maintains an open, transparent and regular dialogue with the Catholic Churches in the EU Member States (represented in Brussels by the **Catholic Bishops Conference/COMECE**) as part of the ongoing dialogue with Churches, religious communities or associations as well as philosophical and non-confessional organisations under **Article 17** TFEU. This dialogue is **separate** from the EU's diplomatic relations with the Holy See. The COMECE is led by Cardinal Reinhard Marx, the Archbishop of Munich and Freising, who is also a member of the Group of Cardinals ("C9") charged with advising Pope Francis on constitutional reform.

The European Economic Community and the Holy See established **diplomatic relations** in 1970. The EU Delegation in Rome was accredited to the Holy See in 2006. The Head of EU Delegation, who chairs meetings of EU Member State Heads of Mission to the Holy See, regularly invites senior Holy See officials for exchanges of views on a wide range of issues.

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 provoked wide media attention. The Encyclical is an extensive document in size and in its coverage of topics relating to the

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.

environment but also to the economic and 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".

The Encyclical can also claim to have left its mark on the SDG negotiations.

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 in 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 HIS EXCELLENCY, MONSIGNOR LEBEAUPIN, ARCHBISHOP AND APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE EU



Archbishop **Alain Paul Lebeaupin** was born in Paris, France, on 2 March 1945. He is the Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union.

Education

Monsignor Lebeaupin was ordained priest on 28 June 1975 for the Diocese of Nice after studying at the Pontifical French Seminary in Rome.
He holds a Doctorate in Civil Law and Masters in Canon Law and Theology.

Diplomatic activity

Monsignor Lebeaupin entered the diplomatic service of the Holy See in 1979.
His first appointment was to the Holy See Observer Mission to the UN in New York, USA (1979 - 1982). Later he served in the Apostolic Nunciature in the Dominican Republic (1982-1985) and at the Apostolic Delegation in Mozambique (1985 - 1989).
From 1989 to 1998, Archbishop Lebeaupin served at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). On 27 March 1996, he was concurrently appointed *Charge d'affaires* of the Apostolic Nunciature to the EU.
On 7 December 1998, with the title of Titular Archbishop of *Vico Equense*, Lebeaupin was appointed the Apostolic Nuncio to Ecuador. He was consecrated by His Holiness Pope John Paul II on 6 January 1999.
On 14 January 2005, Archbishop Lebeaupin was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to Kenya and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN- HABITAT).
On 23 June 2012 he was appointed Apostolic Nuncio to the European Union.

ANNEX II

LETTER PRESIDENT JUNCKER TO POPE FRANCIS



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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