



## **Statement of the Holy See at the Concluding Meeting of the 28<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum, Prague, 10-11 September 2020**

*As delivered by H.E. Archbishop Charles Balvo  
Apostolic Nuncio to the Czech Republic  
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See*

Mr. Moderator,

The Holy See welcomes the opportunity to address this concluding meeting of the 28<sup>th</sup> OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum and wishes to congratulate the Albanian Chairmanship and the Office of the Co-ordinator of Economic and Environmental Activities on their efforts in preparing and organizing this flagship event, despite the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

My Delegation renews its support to the Albanian Chairmanship's focus on preventing and combatting corruption, within both the Economic and Environmental areas of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Dimension.

We all know that corruption is a real danger to the peace and security of our OSCE region. Furthermore, there is reason to be concerned that the vast amount of funds released for Covid-19 pandemic recovery has already attracted criminal activities, which include the risk that those most in need of financial support will remain without the urgently necessary help.

We should be honest enough to acknowledge that corruption occurs, to varying degrees, in each of the OSCE participating States. Only by acknowledging the existence of corruption will we be able to fight against it.

Even so, while the present pandemic is a tremendous test for the international community, it also provides a real opportunity to seek new and innovative solutions that are not divisive, politicized or partial, but that truly seek the common good and the integral human development of all.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Intervention of Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Holy See at the "UN High-Level Event on Financing for Development in the era of Covid-19 and beyond," 28 May 2020.

My Delegation is pleased to inform this Forum that on 1 June 2020, Pope Francis published new procedures and juridical controls for “*transparency, control and competition in the procedures for awarding public contracts of the Holy See and Vatican City State*”. While recognizing the specificity and peculiarities of both entities, Pope Francis wrote, “the operativity of the entire system will constitute an obstacle to restrictive agreements and will make it possible to reduce considerably the danger of corruption of those called upon to govern and manage the bodies of the Holy See and the Vatican City State.”<sup>2</sup>

He notes that the “need for a faithful and honest administration is even more keenly felt and urgent, given that [...] the administrator is called upon to take responsibility for the interests of a community, which go well beyond those of individuals or particular interests.”<sup>3</sup>

This brings us to the core of the scourge of corruption, that when civil officials steal or misappropriate public funds, it effects the whole of the community that they serve.

Many of our Ministerial Council decisions in recent years have focused on the need for Combating Corruption and its important connections to good governance.<sup>4</sup> Solid and lasting economic progress and security are undermined – if not completely thwarted – without good public and corporate governance, transparency and accountability.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, I would like to remind that “corruption, prior to being an act, is a condition: hence the need for culture, education, training, institutional action citizen participation. [...] Laws are necessary but not sufficient. [...] We need to act with courage to stir and provoke consciences, shifting from widespread indifference to the perception of the severity of these phenomena, in order to fight them.”<sup>6</sup>

In closing, my Delegation renews its gratitude to the organizers of this concluding meeting and assures all participants of the Holy See’s active engagement in the work of the Economic and Environmental Dimension of the OSCE.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu\\_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20200519\\_procedure-aggiudicazione-contrattipubblici.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20200519_procedure-aggiudicazione-contrattipubblici.html)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> MC Decision 11/04 Sofia, MC Decision 2/12 Dublin, MC Decision 5/14 Basel, MC Decision 4/16 Hamburg, Mc Decision 8/17 Vienna,

<sup>5</sup> Cf. MC Decision No. 4/16: *Strengthening Good Governance and Promoting Connectivity*.

<sup>6</sup> The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Outcome document of the “International Debate on Corruption” and goals of the *International Consultation Group for justice, corruption, organized crime and mafias*. 31 July 2017.