



THE HOLY SEE
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- **Promoting co-operation on security aspects of environment by, *inter alia*, sustainable use and management of natural resources and preventing pollution, land degradation, ecological risks, natural and man-made disasters;**
- **The way forward.**

Mr. Chairman,

1. In our day, there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of due respect for nature, by the plundering of natural resources, by omnipresent pollution, land degradation and natural and man-made disasters. Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past (cf. Pope John Paul II, Message for the World Day of Peace 1990: *Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all of Creation*).

At the center of all sustainable use and management of natural resources must be humankind's respect for life. That the protection of creation has moral implications cannot be denied. Respect for the life of each and every person cannot be pushed aside for the sake of economic, industrial or agricultural production. It is a question about respect for human life and the conditions in which we find ourselves.

Hence, we must not address our attention only to climate change or global warming, but rather focus on all aspects of the great gift given to humankind by God our Creator. In this vein, Pope Benedict XVI recently asked: "*Can we remain indifferent before the problems associated with such realities as climate change, desertification, the deterioration and loss of productivity in vast agricultural areas, the pollution of rivers and aquifers, the loss of biodiversity, the increase of natural catastrophes and the deforestation of equatorial and tropical regions? Can we disregard the growing phenomenon of "environmental refugees", people who are forced by the degradation of their natural habitat to forsake it – and often their possessions as well – in order to face the dangers*

and uncertainties of forced displacement? Can we remain impassive in the face of actual and potential conflicts involving access to natural resources? All these are issues with a profound impact on the exercise of human rights, such as the right to life, food, health and development” (Message for the World Day of Peace 2010, n. 4) These are the problems that our world is facing today and will continue to face tomorrow. Consequently, these are issues that have great implications for security and with which the OSCE must urgently deal.

2. In this regard, care for the environment can no longer be seen as the responsibility of someone else or everyone else. Environmental standards that are realistic need to be established. They must be realistic to help guarantee that they will be met and maintained. Standards that are elevated beyond reason will be too easily dismissed as unreachable. The setting of standards will come only when it is recognized that protecting the environment is a means not only for the avoidance of environmental and ecological catastrophe, but also as an essential means for peace and security. This recognition will certainly also lead to a new spirit of peaceful relations and cooperation among and with the world's nations.

A correct understanding of the environment prevents the utilitarian reduction of nature to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited; it must not absolutize nature and place it above the dignity of the human person himself.

3. As an example of concrete and tangible initiatives of the Holy See in supporting sustainable use of natural resources and as a part of its “green culture characterized by ethical values”, I would like to inform that in 2008, in Vatican City State, on the roof of the Pope Paul VI Audience Hall, 2,400 solar panels were installed. This new system on the 5,000 square metre roof produces 300 megawatt hours (MWh) of clean energy per year for the Audience Hall and adjacent buildings. This is only the first of various projects whose objective is to create enough renewable energy sources to provide, by 2020, at least 20% of the energy needs of Vatican City State.

4. Responsibility for the environment, the common heritage of mankind, extends not only to present needs but also to those of the future. The ecological crisis reveals the urgent moral need for a new solidarity, especially in relations between the developing nations and those that are highly industrialized. States must increasingly share responsibility, in complimentary ways, for the promotion of a natural and social environment that is both peaceful and healthy. No plan or organization, however, will be able to effect the necessary changes unless we are truly convinced of the absolute need for this new solidarity, which is demanded of us by the ecological crisis and which is essential for peace. This need presents new opportunities for strengthening cooperative and peaceful relations among States.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.