

The future from the Caritas perspective:

We're all hungry for justice, equity, ecological sustainability and joint responsibility!

In recent years the world has been undergoing an unprecedented crisis that is notable for its systemic and international dimensions. In fact, it is a combination of crises (food, energy, climate, financial, economic and social) which has led to increased inequality, exclusion, violence, worsening of conflicts, forced migration, the impoverishment of a growing number of people, and the scandal of 1,000 million people who go hungry.

Faced with this crisis, Caritas Internationalis, a worldwide confederation of 164 supportive Catholic organisations, reaffirms its focus on caring human integral development, namely a comprehensive approach that takes into account the interdependence of the human family and its well-being, in its various dimensions: economic, social, political, cultural, ecological and spiritual, with a view to achieving a society based on the principles of fraternity, justice, equity and solidarity. Caritas supports the human development approach via respect for and realisation of human rights (including the right to development). The eradication of hunger, extreme poverty and exclusion are Caritas' key priorities.

We're calling for a paradigm shift, a new civilisation of love for humanity, which places the dignity and well-being of men and women at the centre of all action. Any commitment undertaken at the Rio + 20 summit should justify this perspective. We call on world leaders to take up this challenge, with courage and confidence, so that this summit may be a message of hope for humanity, especially the poor and excluded.

"Without truth, without trust and love for what is true, there is no social conscience and responsibility, and social action ends up serving private interests and the logic of power, resulting in social fragmentation, especially in a globalised society at difficult times like the present." (CiV 5)

On the road towards this change, along which we hope the Rio + 20 will be a milestone, there are five key elements/dimensions:

1) A future without hunger

We call on leaders to make the fight against hunger a priority and ensure the right to food. Food is the foundation for being able to develop our capacities and talents. If, as the zero document states, one sixth of the world population is undernourished (of which 75% are children in rural areas), this population cannot fully contribute to the well-being of their communities and families. We are wasting important human resources that are vital for the health of our planet. Hunger today has systemic causes. We call for coordinated interventions to address both short-term and long-term food crises. The only hunger we should undergo is the hunger for justice, equity, ecological sustainability and joint responsibility.

2) A future with a vision

We ask that the vision contained in the Millennium Development Goals, and the commitment of leaders to apply them, be maintained. They currently represent a road map for sustainable development and a fairer world. It is important to investigate the meaning of and the need for these goals with the most affected people, so that they may be adapted to current requirements. Moreover, it is vital that, within a renewed framework, these goals contain commitments from developed countries to become involved in the promotion of a development model in favour of the well-being of all humankind, by giving priority to justice, equity, ecological sustainability and joint responsibility.

3) A future in which we look after our home: creation

We ask that the transformative capacity of human beings be used to look after creation, and that projects, ideas and measures aimed at safeguarding the environment be actively encouraged. Our everyday environments, whether rural or urban, should be characterised by a healthy and dignified life, including maximum ecological sustainability. The aspect of conquest and exploitation of natural resources has managed to prevail and spread, and is currently threatening the environment's capacity to accommodate us: the environment as "resource" endangers the environment as "home". The uncontrolled transformation of land through human activity makes spaces and societies increasingly vulnerable, and also leads to inequitable consequences that primarily affect the poorest and most disadvantaged groups, who in many cases are not the ones responsible for the risky practices.

4) A future with a new green economy framework

Caritas supports the idea of a green economy, as long as it respects the ethical principles of equity and solidarity. We call for the construction of a "green economy" vision that does not replace or exclude the "integral and sustainable human development" approaches that have been built up over decades. Indeed, organisations throughout the world are genuinely concerned that the new "green economy" concept incorporates the market model as a core theme, and therefore strengthens the neo-liberal principles of growth as a goal; the market as manager of sustainability; the fixing of unimaginable prices; increased privatisation of common goods (water, oceans, forests); and environmental structural adjustment programmes. The Church's Social Teaching expressly calls for seeking new means of distribution and giving priority to persons in all their aspects, especially the most vulnerable, so that they may lead a dignified life, and this clearly opposes many of the principles of the market-based model. The new economic framework should not focus on maximising profits, but rather promote dignified employment, and especially raise the hopes of the thousands of young people who are unemployed.

5) A future that respects men and women created in the image of God: a new social contract

We call for the development of a code of conduct for global supportive citizenship, namely the drawing up of a new social contract that takes into account our interdependence and requires us to act as responsible citizens, for the common good. We are all consumers of the products of creation, and as responsible persons we can opt for ways of living that favour development, safeguard the environment and reduce negative effects for the poorest. Therefore, we propose an economic model that includes participatory democracy dynamics and promotes human dignity, sustainable human development and distribution of risk. We call on all persons of good will to establish a culture of respect and dialogue that implements access to rights and justice.

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