



One Page – Extra #14

Vatican to U.N.: No sustainable development without ‘absolute respect for life’ in ‘all its stages’

NEW YORK, September 26, 2016 — A Vatican representative told the U.N. last week that for any development to be truly "sustainable," it must be founded on an "authentic and absolute" respect for life.



“As Pope Francis said here last year, ‘The pillars of integral human development have a common foundation, which is the right to life,’ which presumes that ‘we recognize a moral law written into human nature itself, one that includes the natural difference between man and woman (cf. *Laudato Si’*, 155), and absolute respect for life in all its stages and dimensions,’” said Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State for the Holy See, in his September 22 address in New York at the General Debate of the 71st Session of the General Assembly.

The remarks by the cardinal came at the same time as pro-life leaders have critiqued the Vatican's decision to lend support to the United Nations' controversial Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include language calling for “universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services.”

The 17 SDGs set an international agenda for the next 15 years to end poverty, promote the well being and prosperity of people everywhere, and to protect the environment. Despite the lofty goals, the pro-life leaders have expressed concern that hidden within the SDGs is an anti-life and anti-family agenda. They have specifically warned that when the U.N. goals call for “universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services,” it means - as defined in the 1994 Cairo conference - providing women with “modern contraception” and with “safe abortion” where it is legal.

The Holy See's relationship to the SDGs might be described as confusing. Some Holy See representatives have welcomed the goals without reservations. Others have endorsed goals “verbatim” while raising reservations about the meaning of certain problematic terms. While still others have criticized the goals for promoting abortion. Pope Francis himself has called the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “an important sign of hope.”

Cardinal Parolin concluded his address to the General Assembly last week by reaffirming the Pope's commitment to a “more just and truly human society” based on respect for life. “Without authentic and absolute respect for life, there can be no development that is truly human, integral and sustainable,” he said.