



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO HON. Mr SILVIO BERLUSCONI,
PRIME MINISTER OF ITALY,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE G8 SUMMIT
(L'AQUILA, 8-10 JULY 2009)***

Hon. Mr Prime Minister,

With a view to the upcoming G8, the Group of the Heads of State and Government of the most industrialized countries, that will be taking place in L'Aquila from 8 to 10 July under the Italian Presidency, I am pleased to send a cordial greeting to you and to all the participants. I therefore willingly take the opportunity to make a contribution to the reflection on the meeting's themes, as I have done in the past. I was informed by my collaborators of the commitment with which the Government, over which you have the honour to preside, is preparing for this important meeting. I am also aware of the attention you have given to the reflections which, based on the themes of the upcoming Summit, have been formulated by the Holy See, the Catholic Church in Italy and the Catholic world in general, as well as the Representatives of other religions.

The participation of Heads of State or Government not only of the G8 but also of many other nations will ensure that in order to find ways to a shared solution to the principal problems that are affecting the economy, peace and international security, the decisions to be adopted can more faithfully mirror the viewpoints and expectations of the peoples of all the continents. Broadened to encompass the discussions of the forthcoming Summit, this participation therefore seems particularly timely, given the many problems in the world today that are highly interconnected and interdependent. I refer in particular to the challenges of the current economic and financial crisis, as well as to the disturbing data of the phenomenon of climate change. These cannot but impel us to wise discernment and new projects to "'convert' the model of global development" (Benedict XVI, *Angelus Reflection*, 12 November 2006), rendering it capable of effectively promoting integral human development, inspired by the values of human solidarity and of charity in truth. Several of these themes are also treated in my third Encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, which in the next few days will be released to the press.

In preparation for the [Great Jubilee of the Year 2000](#), on the initiative of [John Paul II](#), the Holy See paid great attention to the work of the G8. My venerable Predecessor was in fact convinced that the liberation of the poorest countries from the burden of debt and, more generally, the uprooting of the causes of extreme poverty in the world depended on the full assumption of shared responsibility towards all humanity, which is incumbent on the most financially developed Governments and States. These responsibilities have not diminished; on the contrary, they are even more urgent today. In the recent past partly thanks to the impetus that the Great Jubilee of 2000 gave to the search for adequate solutions to problems related to the debt and to the economic vulnerability of Africa and other poor countries, and partly thanks to the notable economic and political changes in the global scene the majority of less developed countries has been able to enjoy a period of extraordinary growth. This has permitted many of them to hope in the achievement of the goal fixed by the international community on the threshold of the third millennium: to defeat extreme poverty by 2015. Unfortunately, the financial and economic crisis that has been besieging the entire planet since the beginning of 2008 has transformed the circumstances. Now, there is a real risk not only that hopes of emerging from extreme poverty will be extinguished but on the contrary that even populations which have until now benefited from a minimum of material well-being will sink into poverty.

Furthermore, the current global economic crisis carries the threat of the cancellation or drastic reduction of programmes for international aid, especially for Africa and for the other economically less developed countries. Therefore with the same force as that with which [John Paul II](#) asked for the cancellation of the foreign debt I too would like to appeal to the member countries of the G8, to the other States represented and to the Governments of the whole world to maintain and reinforce aid for development, especially aid destined to "make the most" of "human resources", not only in spite of the crisis, but precisely because it is one of the principal paths to its solution. Is it not in fact through investment in the human being in all the men and women of the earth that it will be possible to succeed in effectively dispelling the disturbing prospectives of global recession? Is not this truly the way to obtain, to the extent possible, a trend in the world economy that benefits the inhabitants of every country, rich and poor, large and small?

The issue of access to education is intimately connected to the efficacy of international cooperation. Thus if it is true that "investing" in men and women is necessary, then the goal of basic education for all, without exception, by 2015 must not only be met but must also be generously reinforced. Education is an indispensable condition for democracy to function, for fighting corruption, for exercising political, economic and social rights and for the effective recovery of all States, poor and rich alike. And, by correctly applying the principle of subsidiarity, the support of development cannot but take into account the far-reaching educational action that the Catholic Church and other religious Denominations carry out in the world's poorest and most neglected regions.

I am therefore keen to remind the distinguished participants of the G8 that the measure of

technical efficacy of the provisions to adopt in order to emerge from the crisis coincides with the measure of its ethical value. In other words, it is necessary to bear in mind practical human and family needs. I refer, for example, to the effective creation of positions for all, that enable workers to provide fittingly for their family's needs and to fulfil their primary responsibility as educators of their children and protagonists in the community to which they belong. "A society in which this right is systematically denied", John Paul II wrote, "in which economic policies do not allow workers to reach satisfactory levels of employment, cannot be justified from an ethical point of view, nor can that society attain social peace" (*Centesimus Annus*, n. 43; cf., *Laborem Exercens*, n. 18). And for this very purpose the urgent need for a fair system of international trade is essential, putting into practice and if necessary even going beyond the decisions made in Doha in 2001 to promote development. I hope that all creative energy will be devoted to achieving the UN Millennium Goals concerning the elimination of extreme poverty by 2015. It is only right to reform the international financial structure to ensure effective coordination of national policies, to prevent credit speculation and to guarantee a broad international availability of public and private credit at the service of production and work, especially in the neediest countries and regions.

The ethical legitimization of the political commitments of the G8 will naturally demand that they be confronted with the thought and needs of the entire International Community. To this end, it seems important to reinforce multi-lateralism, not only for economic matters but also for the entire spectrum of the issues concerning peace, global security, disarmament, health and protection of the environment and of natural resources for the present and future generations. The extension of the G8 to other regions certainly constitutes important and significant progress; yet at the time of the negotiations and concrete and operational decisions, it is necessary to take into careful consideration all needs, not only those of the countries that are most important or that have a more marked financial success. In fact, only this can make these decisions actually applicable and sustainable over time. Let the voices of Africa and of the less economically developed countries be heard! Let effective models be sought in order to link the decisions of the various groups of countries, including the G8, with the Assembly of the United Nations. In this way each nation, whatever its political and financial importance, may legitimately express itself in a position of equality with the others.

Lastly, I would like to add that the decision of the Italian Government to host the G8 in the city of L'Aquila a decision approved and shared by the other member States and guests is particularly significant. We have all witnessed the generous solidarity of the Italian people and of other nations, of national and international organizations towards the populations of the Abruzzo region hit by the earthquake. This mobilization of solidarity could constitute an invitation to the members of the G8 and to the Governments and Peoples of the world to face united the current challenges that place humanity with no possibility of postponement before crucial decisions for the destiny of mankind itself, which is closely connected with the destiny of creation.

Hon. Mr Prime Minister, as I implore God's assistance for all those present at the upcoming G8 in

L'Aquila and for the multilateral initiatives intended to resolve the economic and financial crisis and to guarantee a future of peace and prosperity to all men and women without exception, I gladly take this opportunity to express, once again, my esteem for you and, as I assure you of my prayers, I extend to you a respectful and cordial greeting.

From the Vatican, 1 July 2009

BENEDICTVS PP. XVI

**L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English n°27 p.24.*

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