



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 16 February 2017
(OR. en)

6212/17

ENV 123
CLIMA 35
RECH 38
EDUC 40

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Scientific Conference on "Sustainable development and climate changes in the light of the encyclical letter of Holy Father Francis, entitled *Laudato Si'*" (Warsaw, 15 October 2016)
- Information from the Polish delegation

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Polish delegation on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 28 February 2017.

Scientific Conference on "Sustainable development and climate changes in the light of the encyclical letter of Holy Father Francis, entitled *Laudato Si'*" (Warsaw, 15 October 2016)

- Information from the Polish delegation -

On 15 October 2016, an International Scientific Conference entitled *Sustainable Development and Climate Changes in the Light of the Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis Laudato Si'* was held in the Parliament of the Republic of Poland on the occasion of the 1050th Anniversary of the Baptism of Poland. The Conference was organised by the Minister of the Environment of the Republic of Poland, Professor Jan Szyszko, and the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Gerhard Müller. The President of the Republic of Poland, Mr. Andrzej Duda, hosted the conference.

The Conference was attended by over eight hundred participants who were representatives of the Church, the central and local governments, politicians, diplomats and non-governmental organisations from over thirty countries. The wide spectrum of participants ensured a comprehensive and multidimensional look at the content of the Encyclical leading, amongst other things, to the formulation of the following overall conclusions:

1. The Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis entitled *On Care for Our Common Home: Laudato Si'* is the first encyclical completely devoted to human ecology – one of the most important challenges of our times. As the Holy Father did, we emphasise the importance of sustainable development of the world. The central element is a human being and his/her right to work, maintain a family, and the economic development of countries, in accordance with UN conventions, implemented in the 1990s, such as: Framework Convention on Climate Change with the Kyoto Protocol, Convention on the Biological Diversity and the Convention on Combating Desertification. The aforementioned legal acts were supposed to lead to an improvement in air quality, the quality and quantity of fresh water, an end to the extinction of wild species, a reversal of the process of desertification, an increase in the productivity of soils and, as a result, the improvement of living conditions and eradication of hunger in the human population.

2. Despite the introduction of the above conventions and related implementing acts such as the Kyoto Protocol, we are still observing an increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, a deterioration of air quality, a deterioration of water quality, the extinction of wild species, rampant unemployment, the disintegration of families and famine in numerous regions of the world. These problems apply particularly to countries with "lower economic growth", and the highly economically developed countries are to blame for this state of affairs. Not only do they not fulfil their obligations arising from ratified legal documents, but they also favour policies that may not, in principle, achieve positive effects.

3. The participants of the Conference value the postulates included in the Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father. The postulates clearly state that the ecological crisis, which is the basic problem facing the world, can be resolved provided that a new global agreement concerning the sustainable development of the world is planned and implemented. This can be achieved through balanced and diverse agriculture, renewable and minimally polluting forms of energy production, the promotion of greater energy efficiency, the promotion of better forest and sea resources management and ensuring access to drinking water for everyone. The participants of the Conference also agree with the view that the fulfilment of these postulates requires departure from technocracy in favour of an ecological education that is connected to the promotion of the interconnectedness between the natural, historical and cultural heritage of local communities. The participants of the Conference also agree with the postulate regarding the need to cease the promotion of large-scale intensive agriculture and instead to promote conditions favouring small entrepreneurs. These small-scale food systems feed most of the world's population, and, at the same time, use merely a small part of the soil, water and forest resources, while generating less waste.

4. The participants of the Conference believe that the Paris Agreement approved in 2015 at the 21st United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change constitutes a full response to the postulates included in the Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father, entitled *Laudato Si'*. They believe so because the Paris Agreement is of a global nature and applies to all the countries of the world. Moreover, the purpose of this agreement is to achieve a reduction in the rate of increase in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as soon as possible, preferably before the end of this century. This is to be done whilst taking into account the economic interests of various countries and aims to deliver on this as effectively as possible. Both reductions of emissions into the atmosphere and an increase in absorption from the atmosphere through the use of such natural reservoirs of organic carbon as forests and degraded soils should be used for this purpose. There is clearly a compelling need not only for the improvement in air quality, but also for providing food and good quality water to almost a third of the human population of the world. This may not be done without arresting the process of desertification, which, in turn, can be done mainly by capturing carbon from the atmosphere through reforestation and through the regeneration of soils, which must go hand in hand with the protection and reconstruction of domestic biodiversity.

5. The participants of the Conference were very happy to learn about the fulfilment of all conditions relating to the entry into force of the Paris Agreement, which were defined in the Agreement for 2020. It was ratified by more than 55 countries – Parties to the Convention on Climate Change, whose share in overall global emissions accounts for more than 55% thereof. This came about as a result of the fact that the Paris Agreement was ratified by those countries with the largest economies and populations, some of which previously had not ratified the Kyoto Protocol. The participants of the Conference were also very glad to learn that one of the first countries to ratify the Paris Agreement was Poland, which was one of the few countries to meet its reduction targets comfortably, as set by the Kyoto Protocol. Such rapid fulfilment of the targets of the Paris Agreement would suggest that the "Agreement" was well formulated and addressed, facing the world's biggest problems related to the concept of sustainable development, aptly defined in the Encyclical Letter of Holy Father Francis entitled *Laudato Si'*.

6. The most important problems requiring joint action for sustainable development, both on a local and global scale, include:

- The effective introduction of education in terms of integral ecology covering in-depth scientific knowledge. This comprises knowledge of biology and of the ecology of wild species, along with the ability to recognise these in their environment. This should be taught alongside the best practices on the use of the land by local communities and be linked to logical mathematic reasoning.
- The development of research on integral ecology. There is a need to launch global research projects about the impact of the increase of absorption of carbon from the atmosphere by forests and soils on the average global temperature, the quality and quantity of water available for human beings, the improvement in the air quality, desertification and its reversal, shaping and protection of domestic biodiversity, combating famine, exclusion and migrations. This project should include an economic analysis in order to demonstrate what is more rational and feasible for particular regions of the world from the point of view of climate policy as specified in the Paris Agreement. Be it the reduction of emission of carbon dioxide emissions or the absorption of carbon dioxide by forests and soils.
- Minimum bureaucracy to promote rational measures based on knowledge of the role of human beings in creating sustainable development in accordance with the Encyclical Letter of Holy Father Francis entitled *Laudato Si'* and the Paris Agreement.

Poland encourages the European Union Member States to consider the need to enhance education and scientific research on integral ecology and the need to minimise bureaucracy in order to achieve the targets of sustainable development more effectively.