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Statement of the Holy See at the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly Second Committee, Agenda Item 19 (d): "Sustainable Development: Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generations" (New York, 16 October 2014)

Here below the Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See at the 69th session of the United Nations General Assembly Second Committee, Agenda Item 19 (d): "Sustainable Development: Protection of Global Climate for Present and Future Generations" (New York, 16 October 2014):

Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza

Mr. Chair,

The Holy See shares the view of the Open Working Group on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in identifying the eradication of extreme poverty and the ensuring of environmental sustainability as two of the most urgent challenges that we all must face, now and beyond 2015. Today I wish to briefly address the second.

Mr. Chair,

While the impact of climate change is felt globally, developed and technologically advanced countries have greater capacity to adapt and mitigate the adverse effects, while developing and poor nations remain particularly vulnerable. During the Climate Summit on September 23 and on many other occasions, we have heard the urgent pleas of Small Island States that climate change is an existential threat to them. This is paradoxical and unjust, given that the primary factors of climate change, like high consumption and high-quantity greenhouse gas emissions, characterize highly industrialized societies.

That is why the Holy See believes that climate change is not only an environmental question; it is also a question of justice and a moral imperative.

It is a matter of justice to help poor and vulnerable people suffering the most from causes largely not of their making and beyond their control. One concrete step would be to make available to them the best in adaptation

and mitigation technology. And now all eyes are already turned to the Twenty-first Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC and the Eleventh Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, which will take place in Paris in December 2015. There, the poor and the rich –indeed, all of us - will be winners if we could reach agreement on a post-2020 international regime, in which all the nations of the world, including the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases, bind themselves to a universal agreement on climate.

It is along this line that my delegation sees a relevance of the term "responsibility to protect", not only in the humanitarian and human rights areas, but in the question of climate change as well. Everyone shares the responsibility to protect our planet and the human family. Pope Francis has repeatedly underlined the importance of protecting our environment, which all too often, instead of using for the good, we exploit greedily, to one another's detriment. Let us make the conscientious choice of refraining from lifestyles and behavior that would worsen the state of our planet, and let us promote initiatives that protect and heal it. The world has become a village; thus, we must become more and more aware of this mutual and common responsibility. In particular, States have the grave duty to make policy decisions and devise monitoring structures to ensure that present and future generations live in a safe and worthy environment.

Mr. Chair,

While it goes without saying that the challenge of the protection of the global climate requires a great political and economic commitment on the part of the international community, we are not always aware that it also requires prudence and scientific honesty, so that we may not fall into pride, excess and errors. It invites us to humility and mutual comprehension, because not everyone agrees on every datum and on every analysis on the state of our world environment. But one thing is clear: we have the "moral covenant" with our environment, whereby all countries and everyone must commit to work together towards making it a healthy place to live, for the present and for future generations. We are all in it. Fulfilling this shared responsibility is within our reach. Now.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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