

[Allow people to be 'dignified agents of their own destiny,' Holy See tells UN debate](#)

25 September 2017 – The Observer of the Holy See, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary of Relations with States, speaking on the final day of the United Nations General Assembly's annual debate praised this year's theme – 'Focusing on People: Striving for peace and a decent life on a sustainable planet' – saying that Pope Francis "never tires of insisting on people first, especially those who suffer, those who are excluded, marginalized and left behind."

The Archbishop underscored the importance of protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms as the foundation of peace, security and integral human development. The Holy See sees reforming the UN development system as an additional opportunity to place people at the centre of its actions, recounting the Pope's message to 'allow them to be dignified agents of their own destiny.'

Turning to the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change, he said that while Pope Francis defined the Agenda as an "important sign of hope," he warned against "assuaged consciences," saying: "We must not rest until the legal commitments have been truly accomplished and the political promises have been fulfilled in the lives of people."

The duty to prevent wars and violent conflicts is an essential component of the 'responsibility to protect,' he continued. Against that backdrop, the Archbishop stressed the need for an environment of trust saying that "prevention requires, first of all, restoring faith in the capacity of humankind for dialogue." He encouraged all countries to take urgent steps back from military preparations, exhorting that "all the diplomatic and political means of mediation should be engaged to avoid the unspeakable."

Another great challenge facing the international community is trafficking in persons. The Archbishop pointed to conflicts, extreme poverty, underdevelopment and exclusion along with the lack of education and employment as being at the root of this and other contemporary forms of slavery.

"Pope Francis calls on all, in particular the competent authorities, to address such a heinous crime through effective juridical instruments, to punish those who profit from it, to assist the healing and the reintegration of its victims, and to eradicate its root causes," he stated, adding "our response must be commensurate to this great evil of our time."

[Full statement available here](#)