

Cardinal Peter Turkson, Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, has released a message for World Tourism Day 2017, which will be held on 27 September.

The theme chosen for this year is: "Sustainable tourism: a tool for development".

### ***"Sustainable Tourism – a tool for development"***

1. On the annual occasion of World Tourism Day, celebrated every 27 September 2017, the Church joins civil society in addressing this phenomenon, in the conviction that every genuinely human activity must find its place in the hearts of Christ's disciples [1].

For the first time, this message is issued by the new Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, as part of its mission.

The United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. Opportunely, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has followed in the same vein by choosing Sustainable Tourism: a tool for development as the theme for this year's Day.

2. When we say tourism, we are talking about a phenomenon of major importance, both in light of the number of people involved (travellers and workers) and for the many benefits that it can bring to society (economic, cultural and social), but also given the risks and dangers that it can create in many areas.

According to the World Tourism Organization's latest Barometer, for the year 2016, the number of international tourist arrivals is around 1.2 billion. Worldwide, the sector accounts for 10% of GDP and 7% of total exports, also considering that 1 out of 11 jobs are in tourism. It therefore occupies an important place in the economies of individual states and in policies that focus on inclusive development and environmental sustainability globally.

3. Tourism can be an important tool for growth and the fight against poverty. Nevertheless, according to the Church's social doctrine, true development "cannot be restricted to economic growth alone". In fact, "to be authentic, it must be well rounded"; that is, "it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man", as the Encyclical *Populorum progressio* [2] notes. In this regard, Paul VI stressed the need to promote a "full-bodied humanism", including the material and spiritual needs for the full development of each person in dignity [3]. Twenty years later, in 1987, the UN introduced the concept of sustainable development as a development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" [4]. For the Church, the concept of integrality, when connected to the expression human development, also includes the United Nations' idea of sustainability, and embraces all aspects of life: social, economic, political, cultural, and spiritual, making them elements in a single synthesis, the human person.

The UNWTO has applied these ideas to promoting sustainable tourism [5]. This means that it must be responsible, and not destructive or detrimental to the environment nor to the socio-cultural context of the locality. Moreover, it must be particularly respectful of the population and their heritage, with a view to safeguarding personal dignity and labour rights, especially those of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Holiday time cannot be a pretext either for irresponsibility or for exploitation: in fact, it is a noble time in which everyone can add value to one's own life and that of others. Sustainable tourism is also a development tool for economies in difficulty if it becomes a vehicle of new opportunities and not a source of problems.

In its 2017 Resolution, the United Nations recognizes "the important role of sustainable tourism as a positive instrument towards the eradication of poverty, the protection of the environment, the improvement of quality of life and the economic empowerment of women and youth and its contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development, especially in developing countries" [6]. In this sense, three dimensions of sustainability are promoted: the ecological, aiming for the maintenance of ecosystems; the social, which develops in harmony with the host community; and the economic, which stimulates inclusive growth. In the context of Agenda 2030, this International Year is therefore an opportunity to encourage governments to adopt

appropriate policies, the industry to embrace good practice, and to raise awareness among consumers and local people, highlighting how an integral conception of tourism can contribute to sustainable development.

4. Conscious that “in all her being and actions, the Church is called to promote the integral development of the human person in the light of the Gospel” [7], we Christians want to offer our contribution so that tourism can assist in the development of peoples, especially the most disadvantaged. We therefore propose our reflection. We recognize God as the creator of the universe and father of all human beings, and He who makes us brothers. We must put the human person as the focus of our attention; we recognize the dignity of each person and the relationships among persons; we must share the principle of the common destiny of the human family and the universal destination of earthly goods. The human being acts not as a master, but as a “responsible steward” [8]. In acknowledging each other as brothers, we will understand “the principle of gratuitousness and the logic of gift” [9] and our duties of solidarity, justice and universal charity [10].

We now ask ourselves: how can these principles be practically applied to the development of tourism? What are the consequences for tourists, entrepreneurs, workers, governors, and local communities? It is an open reflection. We invite all those involved in the sector to engage in serious discernment and to promote practices towards attaining this, accompanying behaviours and lifestyle changes towards a new way of relating to each other. The Church is making its own contribution, launching initiatives that really place tourism in the service of the integral development of the person. This is why we talk about tourism with a human touch, which is based on projects of community tourism, cooperation, solidarity, and an appreciation of the great artistic heritage which is an authentic way of beauty [11].

In his address to the United Nations, Pope Francis stated: “The common home of all men and women must continue to rise on the foundations of a right understanding of universal fraternity and respect for the sacredness of every human life, of every man and every woman [...]. This common home of all men and women must also be built on the understanding of a certain

sacredness of created nature”[12]. May we live out our commitment in the light of these words and these intentions!

Vatican City, 29 June 2017

Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson  
Prefect

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[1] Council II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 7 December 1965, no. 1.

[2] Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Populorum progressio*, 26 March 1967, no. 14.

[3] Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Populorum progressio*, 26 March 1967, no. 42.

[4] World Commission On Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (also known as the Brundtland Report), August 1987. This Commission was created by the UN General Assembly in 1983.

[5] World Tourism Organisation, *The Hague Declaration on Tourism*, 10-14 April 1989, Principle III.

[6] United Nations Organization, Resolution A/RES/70/193 approved by the General Assembly on 22 December 2015.

[7] Pope Francis, Apostolic Letter *Humanam progressionem* in the form of a ‘*Motu Proprio*’, with which the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development was established, 17 August 2016.

[8] Pope Francis, Encyclical *Laudato si’*, 24 May 2015, no. 116.

[9] Pope Benedict XVI, Encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, 29 June 2009, no. 36.

[10] Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Populorum progressio*, 26 March 1967, no. 44.

[11] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 November 2013, no. 167.

[12] Pope Francis, Address to the members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization, 25 September 2015.