



Final Statement of the Dialogue Between Civilizations on the Common Good



We must implement the common good, first and foremost a common home with a common prosperity. With the world falling far behind the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on climate change, on 27 and 28 June 2023 we convened at the Academy's headquarters in the Vatican Gardens a meeting of scientists, economists, political scientists, sociologists, philosophers and theologians dedicated to the challenge of achieving the SDGs, as expressed in the United Nations 2030 Agenda, which articulates some key elements of the principle of the *common good*, and, as such, figures prominently in the activities of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and of the Global Foundation.

The meeting involved thinkers from many parts of the world who addressed these challenges through a dialogue between civilisations on the common good and against the backdrop of the 2015 encyclical letter of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si' – On Care for our Common Home*.

Towards a dialogically born culture

Cooperation for a better world starts with dialogue among ourselves and about our own beliefs. Today “we are not living an epoch of change so much as an epochal change”, as Pope Francis says.[1] We need a paradigm change from a dialogue of cultures to a dialogically born culture. As maintained by the contemporary Chinese philosopher Tu Weiming, dialogical culture does not stand for a mere exchange of views to know one another and mitigate the alienating tendencies

that may accompany an encounter between citizens of diverse cultures. It must ignite an authentic dialogue within an ethical framework of requirements and attitudes for social objectives.

The requirements for dialogue are freedom, fraternity, and equality, as well a common search for truth. The notion of fraternal dialogue was first introduced into Catholic Social Teaching in the Apostolic Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes* (§25). “Fraternity” stands here for a special kind of solidarity – the solidarity which exists among those who, despite their obvious differences and mindsets, are children of the same God, in stewardship of the same world, and who treat each other accordingly. From this perspective, engaging in a fraternal dialogue requires trust in the other with open hearts and open eyes. The first stage is to start to work together for some shared goal. As we work together, we start to move into the second stage, that is, we begin to recognize and appreciate the nobility of the motivation of the other who has entered into this shared practical project from a very different starting point from our own. The third is to allow that positions that are different from our own raise questions for our own way of seeing the world.[2]

In 2017 the Congregation for Catholic Education issued guidelines on *Educating to Fraternal Humanism* that can be seen as a forerunner of the 2020 Papal encyclical letter on human fraternity, *Fratelli Tutti – On Fraternity and Social Friendship*. Despite cultural differences that affect the understanding of certain words, the SDGs point at common global challenges which require the cooperation of all countries and which make the search for dialogue precious and not deferrable. We are called upon to align actions with words and to link ethical principles (e.g., peace, fairness, respect, democracy) with social and civic choices. As Pope Francis has pointed out, we need a “grammar of dialogue” that can “build bridges and ... find answers to the challenges of our time”.[3] Our common ground, the grammar of dialogue, entails cultivating the seeds of a grammar of the commons, and of an organic syntax of ethics. Our work shall be a combination of heritage put into action for the sake of worldwide benefit and in view of the flourishing of a rising and deepening cultural debate. And our common nature will emerge patently in conjunction with our heritage of values.

A conceptual nomenclature was discussed during the workshop, including: Compassion (to all beings) for SDG 13 & 15; Frugality (know when to stop, enough is enough) for SDG 12; Humility (knowing human’s limit); Happiness as 福 (fu), the Chinese version of Happiness ευδαιμονία (eudaimonia), and its five dimensions of Longevity 寿 (shou), Plenty 富 (fu), Peace 康宁 (kangning), Loving Virtue 好德 (haode), Concern for next generations 考终名 (kaozhongming).

Emerging influence in world affairs

Presently, all members of the G20 are influential economies and major traders in the world. It would be expected from these nations to take the lead on such a dialogue, thereby also signaling a kind of moral leadership and accountability to all humanity.

In recent decades, China's economic and political importance has grown on an unprecedented scale and speed, returning China to a preeminent position in the world system that it enjoyed over much of the past 2,000 years. Recent international developments, including the launch by China of new global frameworks such as the Global Development Initiative and the Global Civilizations Initiative, and new multilateral institutions such as the Belt and Road Initiative, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and China's own growing presence in key international institutions, show a newfound Chinese pro-activeness in the international sphere. This re-emergence of China has resulted in an increase in bilateral and multilateral engagements on a vast variety of issues such as trade, research/technology, sustainable development, climate change, foreign direct investment, and human rights. At the same time, China's rapid rise has created tensions with the United States and some other countries. Overcoming fear and generating a dynamic of trust in international relations is now a major and urgent requirement in the current state of the world.

Because of China's and India's increasingly key role in global matters, it is important for the two countries to engage proactively and constructively with the rest of the world; and it is equally important for the rest of the world to engage constructively and cooperatively with both China and India, so that all parts of the world may have a better understanding of each other. This update and upgrade in relations and understanding must be based on objective analysis grounded in facts and insights from science and research which is carried out by the academia and independent think-tanks, as well as surveys and trend analysis on the experiences of stakeholders across a number of fields. At the intersection of science, economics, and global affairs, with this workshop we foster stronger bridges between all nations and regions of the world.

In conclusion, the SDGs underscore that achieving the common good requires urgent and significant global cooperation, both within regions and across regions of the world. Some directions of common work are as follows:

1. Reorienting economies towards the common good to raise human wellbeing and planetary flourishing 繁荣 (fanrong), and to reduce inequalities of opportunities and outcomes. In this perspective, the redesign of the current System of National Accounts should be pursued not only to go "beyond GDP", but also to build a new system focused on the measurement of wellbeing now and prospectively in the future. New measurements of a Fraternal and Sustainable Economy for the Common Good must ensure that the well-being of humanity and of the planet are at the core of the SDGs, and are in line with the philosophy of the 2030 Agenda and the concept of integral ecology as defined in *Laudato Si'*.
2. Promoting new global governance arrangements to oversee the sustainability of the global environmental commons, including the climate, the oceans, biodiversity, world heritage sites, and to ensure a fair and just transition that advantages the poor. The formulation of such

arrangements should be affiliated with the United Nations and its many institutions, and should involve governments as well as religious groups, civil society, enlightened businesses and investors, educators, students, and young people around the world.

[1] *Meeting with the participants in the fifth convention of the Italian Church: Address of the Holy Father*, Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence: Tuesday, 10 November 2015.

[2] These three stages are proposed by Dominique Pire, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1958. See his book, *Building Peace*, London, Corgi Books, 1967.

[3] *Educating to Fraternal Humanism: Building a "Civilization of Love": 50 Years After Populorum Progressio: Guidelines*, Vatican, Congregation for Catholic Education, 2017, 12-13.