



June 3, 2013

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2

**Re: Letter to the leaders of the G8 nations
from National Conferences of Catholic Bishops**

Dear Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences in the G8 nations, we urge you to protect poor persons and assist developing countries at the upcoming G8 Summit in the United Kingdom.

Pope Francis, in his inaugural homily, committed himself to “open his arms to protect all of God’s people and embrace with tender affection the whole of humanity, especially the poorest, the weakest, the least important...” The G8 nations, as leaders in the world community, should do no less.

Your focus on agriculture and nutrition ahead of the G8 Meeting is timely. In a world that has made great strides in improving food production and distribution, far too many of God’s children still go to bed hungry or suffer from a lack of nutrition, a tragedy that has lifelong consequences for health and educational achievement. In particular, there is a need to strengthen assistance to African countries in order to improve local agriculture.

The G8’s attention to tax evasion, trade and transparency is equally timely. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches: “Submission to authority and co-responsibility for the common good make it morally obligatory to pay taxes...” (no. 2240). It is a moral obligation for citizens to pay their fair share of taxes for the common good, including the good of poor and vulnerable communities, just as States also have an obligation to provide “a reasonable and fair application of taxes” with “precision and integrity in administering and distributing public resources” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 355).

Trade and trade rules must serve the universal common good of the whole human family and the special needs of the most vulnerable nations. It is counterproductive to provide agricultural development assistance on the one hand and then to use unfair agricultural trade policies that harm the agricultural economics of poorer nations on the other.

The G8's emphasis on transparency is critical. Human dignity demands truth, and democracy requires transparency. With more and better information, civil societies, including faith-based organizations, can hold their governments accountable and help insure that resources reduce poverty and improve the health of the whole society.

In his Easter message, Pope Francis lamented: "Peace to the whole world, torn apart ... by the iniquitous exploitation of natural resources!" Sadly, the peoples of many nations that are blessed with an abundance of natural resources find themselves victims of a paradox that some refer to as the "resource curse". Genuine transparency and participation can change the "resource curse" into a blessing.

In word and gesture, our Holy Father, Pope Francis, reminds all of us to act in ways that protect "the poorest, the weakest, the least important".

By asking first how a given policy will affect the poor and the vulnerable, you can help assure that the common good of all is served. As a human family we are only as healthy as our weakest members.

We pray that your meeting will be blessed by a spirit of collaboration that enables you to take steps to improve nutrition, reduce hunger and poverty, and strengthen just tax, trade and transparency policies for the common good of all.

With the assurance of my prayers for God's blessings upon your work, I am,

Yours sincerely in Our Lord,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard W. Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a cross at the beginning.

The Most Reverend Richard W. Smith
Archbishop of Edmonton and
President of the Canadian Conference
of Catholic Bishops

Copies of this letter have also been sent to:

- The Hon. David Cameron, Prime Minister, United Kingdom
- The Hon. François Hollande, President, French Republic
- The Hon. Angela Merkel, Chancellor, Federal Republic of Germany

- The Hon. Enrico Letta, President of the Council of Ministers, Repubblica Italiana (Italian Republic)
- The Hon. Shinzō Abe, Prime Minister, Japan
- The Hon. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin, President, Russian Federation
- The Hon. Barack Obama, President, United States of America

The other signatories of this letter are:

- The Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster, President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
- His Eminence Seán Cardinal Brady, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, President, Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference
- The Most Rev. Philip Tartaglia, Archbishop of Glasgow, President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Scotland
- His Eminence André Cardinal Vingt-Trois, Archbishop of Paris, President, Bishops' Conference of France (Conférence des évêques de France)
- The Most Reverend Robert Zollitsch, Archbishop of Freiburg, President of the German Bishops' Conference (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz)
- His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Bagnasco, Archbishop of Genoa, President, Episcopal Conference of Italy
- The Most Reverend Leo Jun Ikenaga, S.J., Archbishop of Osaka, President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Japan
- The Most Reverend Paolo Pezzi, F.S.C.B., Archbishop of Madre di Dio a Mosca, President, Conference of Catholic Bishops of the Russian Federation
- His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan, Archbishop of New York, President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- His Eminence Reinhard Cardinal Marx, Archbishop of Munich and Freising, President, Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community