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**Triglav Circle, Seminar of 8-10 July 2016, Domaine de La Garde, Bourg en Bresse: *Enriching the United Nations 2030 Agenda with the encyclical letter Laudato Si'***

### **NOTES ON THE DEBATE<sup>1</sup>**

1. Two documents were before the Seminar.<sup>2</sup> The first, entitled, *Explanatory Note and Themes for Selection of Questions in an Agenda*, was circulated at the end of May. It provided a brief analysis and comparison of two texts - a text adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2015 entitled *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (thereafter the 2030 Agenda) and the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si', On Care for Our Common Home*, issued by Pope Francis in May 2015 (thereafter the Letter)- and it argued that the Letter should be used to “enrich” the 2030 Agenda. The second document, made available two weeks before the meeting, was an *Agenda and Programme of Work*.

2. The view of the author of these two documents was that *Laudato Si'*, the personal message of the charismatic leader of a religious institution, was a remarkable document, accurate in its diagnosis of the current world situation, and very convincing in its philosophical, moral and political prescriptions. In contrast, the 2030 Agenda, the product of negotiations in an intergovernmental and international body, was marked by the rich scope and ambition of its goals and the paucity of its analyses and policy recommendations. But, this Agenda needed to be supported by all persons and organizations of good will because it had the unique legitimacy of having been adopted by all governments in an assembly of most nations of the world. In addition, it was a flexible document: its implementation was essentially left to the discretion of governments and other actors in the “partnerships” that were to be the core of international

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<sup>1</sup> These Notes were put together by Jacques Baudot, Secretary of the Triglav Circle, as were the Explanatory Note and the Agenda.

<sup>2</sup> Four written comments on the Explanatory Note were also made available at the meeting. They were written by Christian Balslev-Olesen, Steve Gorman, Max Harris (non- participant) and Konrad Raiser.

cooperation in the years ahead. The Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis provided the best source of inspiration and action for supporting and enriching the 2030 Agenda.<sup>3</sup>

**3.** Was this view shared by the participants in the Domaine de La Garde Seminar? Though this question was not explicitly addressed, a number of impressions emerged from the two-day gathering:

- Represented was the school of thought that insists on the limitations of this type of general document (the Letter as well as the 2030 Agenda) enouncing principles and making pronouncements that can be easily labelled as “wishful thinking”. On issues of local or global politics and life in society, only actions matter. The implementation of ideas presented in declarations and similar texts raises enormous difficulties.
- *Laudato Si'* was generally considered an interesting document, but the enthusiasm of the author of the *Explanatory Note* was not shared by everyone. It was said that the ideas contained in the Letter were not new. It was noted that the views of Pope Francis were not representative of the views of the whole Catholic Church. The universality of the message was put in question because of its roots in the Catholic tradition and doctrine. Prior to the meeting, a non-participant commented that it would have been useful to indicate in the Note the shortcomings of the Letter (was this a reference to paragraph 50 in which Pope Francis states that “it must nonetheless be recognized that demographic growth is fully compatible with an integral and shared development”? Or/and a reference to paragraph 120: “Since everything is interrelated, concern for the protection of nature is also incompatible with the justification of abortion.”?)<sup>4</sup>
- Although no participant directly challenged the central argument made in the Note that the 2030 Agenda had to be supported because nothing comparable was available, a number of remarks showed that the image of the United Nations, perhaps particularly in the exercise of its normative function, is presently rather negative or, worst, unintelligible. The 2030 Agenda appears to suffer from this disaffection towards the United Nations. Leaving aside the length and style of the document itself, the point was made that since it is impossible to mobilize governments and peoples for the

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<sup>3</sup>With regard to the Paris Agreement, formally linked to the Agenda and adopted two months later, the Note argued that its implementation will depend in part on the implementation of the Agenda, notably for the issue of the required changes in the current patterns of production and consumption, that is of life-styles and perceptions of what constitutes economic and social progress.

<sup>4</sup> Question: Is it necessary to have a Christian culture/education (especially a familiarity with the Social Doctrine of the Church starting with the encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum*) and to have an experience or informed interest in the work of international organizations to appreciate, like, admire *Laudato Si'*? The “author” would like to believe that this not the case, but....confirmation would be welcome.

achievement of seventeen goals, it would have been better to adopt a single objective, the elimination of poverty. Another observation was that the 2030 Agenda was superficial and conservative, ignoring the dysfunctions of the current world economic and political order, because, particularly since the 1980s, the main power(s) prevents the United Nations and the other international organizations to address global issues: hence the lofty goals of the document without the necessary policies to achieve them.

- Several participants, in highlighting the “local level”, the “role of NGOs”, of “religious organizations”, of the “civil society”, of the “private sector”, seem to lend their support to the ongoing ideological shift from the “public” to the “private” and from “central” to “decentralized” institutions. The 2030 Agenda itself reflects this ideological change. Most conspicuously, for the implementation of its seventeen goals, it does not advocate any development or strengthening of international law and it reduces the United Nations to a role of support of the state and non-state actors. The opposite stance was taken in the Explanatory Note: an “enrichment” of the 2030 Agenda by the recognition of “the urgent need of a true world political authority” (paragraph 175 of the Letter) was mentioned.
- In this context of hesitant or unformulated adhesion to the basic assumptions of the Explanatory Note – the exceptional quality and relevance of *Laudato Si’* and the “indispensability” of the 2030 Agenda – and certainly also for lack of time, the notion of enrichment of the latter by the former, in concrete and practical terms at various levels of reflection and action, was hardly addressed during this Seminar.
- The following points were, however, made: (1) the best way to proceed was to choose a central issue, for instance the protection of the environment, and to consider it very systematically, including the causes of the present situation and the characteristics of the measures adopted and their consequences; (2) a holistic approach was possible when the issue at hand was well defined and intellectually and politically manageable;<sup>5</sup> (3) the style and content of the Agenda were so uninspiring that it would be better to extract from the Letter a few key elements and to try to graft them on debates and decisions that will take place at various levels in the years to come.

**4. In the Agenda and Programme of Work** three items, with a number of suggested topics/questions attached to each, were proposed. A fourth topic was on the follow-up of this Seminar:

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<sup>5</sup> A book published in 1963, *La nature de-naturee*, by Jean Dorst, was mentioned as an excellent illustration of this approach.

Item 1: *The world according to the 2030 Agenda and according to Laudato Si'*

Item 2: *Environment, Nature, Creation, Integral Ecology*

Item 3: *The common good*

Item 4: *The follow-up of this Seminar*

The debates that took place at La Garde under these four items are summarized below.

**Item 1: *The world according to the 2030 Agenda and according to Laudato Si'***

5. The concept of sustainable development, central to the 2030 Agenda and only link between the 17 goals though not defined, was criticized as a contradiction in terms. The Letter made similar criticism. It was recalled that at the time of the writing of the Brundtland report, the term responsible development had been proposed. For its part, the World Council of Churches talked of sustainable communities. Resilience, was another possible alternative to sustainability.

6. For Pope Francis, the question was what is happening to our common home and the perspective was from the viewpoint of the excluded. One could hear “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.” Such perspective was changing the way we are looking at the world. A “cultural revolution” was needed, for the crises that affect our planet was not only ecological, but also cultural, moral and spiritual. A “change of course” was imperative. The current approach to science and technology was part of the problem, rather than the solution. The Agenda was a great progress from the Millennium Development Goals, as it evoked the four freedoms of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Its seventeen goals were not objectionable. But, in trying to provide a “realistic”, “neutral”, “balanced” picture of the world, it was actually unrealistic. It had no historical perspective, no analysis of the causes of the problems it portends to address. The seventeen goals were juxtaposed, not integrated. The discourse of the United Nations was in summary the following: “We know what the problems are; we know where to go; the issue is the political will.” Can these two very different discourses on the world and its situation be treated as complementary?

7. Yes, it was noted that the Agenda plus the Paris Agreement have the political authority and the Letter has the moral authority. Through the notion of accountability a passage between the two texts is possible.

8. It was emphasized that the Paris Agreement – often seen as a political success that had been greatly facilitated by the prior agreement between the United States and China - was an illustration of what was possible, and not possible, at this historical juncture. And it was futile to refuse to see the world as it was. Possible were commitments, though here about actions and procedures and not about results. Sanctions were not possible. It had been asserted that the

main powers, particularly the United States, had consistently prevented the United Nations, or any international organization, to look at global issues, typically those touching upon the political economy of the world(see above paragraph 2(b).) Perhaps is this true, but the fact is that climate change defies disaggregation. It is technically impossible to disaggregate and it calls for global goals, as reflected in the Paris Agreement.

**9.**There is much talk about the weakening of the United Nations, or even its irrelevance. This might be true for the UN per se, particularly for the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. But some organizations of the United Nations system, or family, are powerful and play a very useful role. This is for instance the case of the UNICEF. And some main ideas, or trends, or efforts on the international scene are good, are valid and promising: so is the concept and practice of partnership; so is the emphasis on the local level, on the role of organizations of the civil society, on the concept of vulnerability, and on “leaving no one behind.” The world is indeed confronted with serious problems, but a lot of positive and “good” things are happening. We need to deepen our reflection and to clarify what “we” (persons and organizations of god will?) are trying to achieve.

**10.**In a comparable vein, it was noted that the reality of the world scene was different actions at different levels by a great variety of organizations, public and private, global and local, technical and political. The Agenda and its seventeen goals was perhaps the least common denominator of diverse views and interests, but it was a useful common framework. And a lot of good is coming from other sources, for instance the faith organizations, and even from some private companies and corporations. There are numerous synergies and a considerable amount of competence and good will in the world.

**11.**The notions of accountability and of sanctions – already mentioned in paragraphs 6 and 7 above – generated a number of comments. At one end of the spectrum, were the strong denunciations of the weakening of the rule of law at the international level. In particular, the human rights perspective was conspicuously absent from the 2030 Agenda. Of course, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent treaties and conventions were mentioned in the first part of the document, as were a great number of other texts adopted by the United Nations, but the 17 goals and 169 targets ignored these rights and their enforcement. The normative standards of accountability, indispensable to the monitoring of respect for human rights, were absent from the Agenda. Statistical evidence of level of achievement of an objective is very different from accountability, which is geared to action. In general, the Agenda was silent on the development of international law and this was consistent with the emphasis on partnership and actions at the local level by “multiple stakeholders.” As noted in the Explanatory Note, this aspect of the dominant political culture was explicitly criticized in *Laudato Si’*. Pope Francis was insisting on the necessity of an international

regime of accountability and sanctions. Political action was to be shaped by morality and accountability.

**12.** On this subject, the opposite end of the spectrum of opinions was not represented at this Seminar, in the sense that no participant acknowledged the weakening of international law, including human rights law, and rejoiced of this development. But, a rigorous analysis of the political situation in international fora concluded with the affirmation that sanctions and any other form of accountability were presently out of question, was interpreted by some participants as realism bordering on conservatism. The assumption of these critics was that observing without condemning and seeking an alternative is in fact accepting. It was also pointed out that sanctions were perfectly acceptable to the dominant powers when they were facilitating a smooth functioning of global capitalism: see the World Trade Organization.

**13.** Still on the subject of accountability, the difficulties at the international global level should not obfuscate the fact that promising methods and policies are being put in place by organizations that reconcile the pursuit of the common good with the flexibility and efficiency that are sometimes (often? always?) the attributes of the private sector. Innovations, of whatever type, have to be gauged by their social usefulness. What matters is the ability to measure the impact of one's ideas and actions on people's lives. With this objective, in the context of aid policies and public/private partnerships, measurable indicators are being developed and the different parties are held accountable. This is a form of accountability which is collaborative rather than coercive. It certainly has limits, notably for ensuring respect of human rights by governments and other societal actors, but, in an increasingly pluralistic world, it is helpful. Also, the rise of social entrepreneurs and the progress in various expressions of the social responsibility of the private business sector ought to be acknowledged and encouraged.

**14.** Although the 2030 Agenda has seventeen goals, its main focus is on the elimination of poverty, which is presented as "the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development" (paragraph 2 of the Declaration, in Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). A number of comments were related to this issue of poverty:

- Goal 1 reads "End poverty in all its forms everywhere (our underlining)." But the text of the Agenda –including the targets and indicators attached to Goal 1 - conveys the impression that poverty remains an issue of developing countries (even actually of the "least developed" among them) and is still perceived as resulting exclusively from lack of income. What about poverty in affluent countries, which has been steadily rising since the end of the 1980s? And, who is the poorest, the person with "less than two dollars a day" living in a village of the South with a traditional culture of community, or the person with a minimum wage living in a city of the North? The "global solidarity"

advocated in both the Letter and the Agenda ought to be among countries and also across national borders. In that spirit, several participants insisted on the concept of vulnerability, if not as a substitute but at least as a complement of the concept of poverty. In the Letter, Pope Francis talked about the excluded, also a much broader notion than material poverty.

- Keeping the traditional and “materialistic” definition of poverty, as the Agenda appears to do, mean also keeping its opposite, namely the traditional and “materialistic” definition of wealth, or comfort, or happiness. Then, it was pointed out, there is a glaring contradiction between the goal of eliminating poverty and the goals pertaining to the protection of the environment, including those related to climate change. The non-defined notion of “sustainability”, even concretized by numerous and well oriented technological and other innovations, is unlikely to render “development” compatible with the health of the planet. Changes in life-styles, stemming from changes in the conceptions of individual happiness and social progress, are imperative to reconcile struggle against poverty with care for the planet Earth.
- The Agenda, by not explicitly analyzing the causes of persistent poverty (even poverty in its limited sense of material poverty), suggests that lack of economic growth and development is the cause of the misery that affects so many people in the world. This stance, it was emphasized, characterized the Agenda as a fundamentally conservative document. In particular, by ignoring the dysfunctions of the world economic and financial system, it endorses the current process of globalization and it vindicates global capitalism and the subordination of politics to global finance. In contrast, the Letter is revolutionary, as it called for a “change of course” and a “cultural revolution.”
- The silence of the Agenda on the demographic situation and trends in the world was noted and deplored. The Seminar, however, did not discuss further this issue on which, as alluded to in paragraph 2(a) above, the Letter reflects the traditional position of the Catholic Church.

**15.** Several participants noted the “abstract” character of the Agenda. It appears to be detached from the realities of the world, from all the conflicts that are causing immense suffering and destruction, and from the lives of ordinary people. It denotes a huge gap between the international discourse and people’s mindset. It assumes that everybody is endowed with the sort of scientific and instrumental rationality that has become dominant among the world elites and their international organizations. This is a very naïve assumption. Example: some years ago, a member of a chamber of agriculture in a poor country tried to organize and regulate the fishing in a river, notably by explaining to the local fishermen that they should not catch small fish. He ran into difficulties because most of the fishermen thought that fish was provided by God and therefore could not be in danger of extinction. There is a strong need to educate and

inform people at the grass-root level. At the same time, one has to listen carefully to the wisdom and the knowledge accumulated since many centuries.

**16.** The view was expressed that the Letter of Pope Francis should be the subject of an inter-religious dialogue at the highest level and in an international setting. The United Nations was the proper forum for such a dialogue and it should be put on its agenda as soon as possible. The situation of the world, accurately depicted in *Laudato Si*, pointed to the urgency of mobilizing the energies and influence of persons free from the constraints of national interests and apt at understanding the problems and need of the human family. Such a dialogue, it was pointed out, should not be limited to religious leaders. It should include women and men representing secular sources of wisdom and spiritual insights independent from institutionalized religions.

### **Item 2: Environment, Nature, Creation, Integral Ecology**

**17.** In the Agenda of this Seminar the presentation of this item was the following: “The 2030 Agenda, as all negotiated documents produced by the United Nations since the Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, uses the word “environment” to depict everything that surrounds Man and its activities. The physical world and the other living species are **external to man**. Nature is not part of the international language. For Pope Francis, this conception of the “environment” reflects a “rupture” of Man with the creation and nature: “The Harmony between the Creator, humanity and the creation as a whole was disrupted by our presuming to take the place of God and refusing to acknowledge our creaturely limitations. This in turn distorted our mandate to “have dominion” over the earth (cf. *Gen* 1:28), to “till and keep it” (*Gen* 2:15). (...) And, when we speak of the “environment,” what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. **We are part of nature**, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it (paragraph 139 of *Laudato Si*).

**18.** For Pope Francis, such a separation of Man from Nature is a facet of a modernity dominated by the “techno-economic paradigm” and by “practical relativism”. It is part of the “complex crisis” and of the “ethical and cultural decline” that beset the world. It explains why, in spite of many efforts at all levels and some successes – notably the restoration of the ozone layer – the overall health of our planet continues to deteriorate. Only a new model of development, a new conception of what constitutes progress and what bring happiness, freedom and peace, will enable mankind to respond to “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”.

**19.** One has to pay attention to the meaning of words, and their origins. “Environment” has half a column in the French Robert dictionary, with four meanings, the last being (1964, from the English/American environment): *Ensemble des conditions naturelles (physiques, chimiques, biologiques) et culturelles (sociologiques) dans lesquelles les organismes vivants (en particulier l’homme) se développent; **ambiance, atmosphere, entourage, habitat, milieu.**Environment*



rural, urbain. *Qualite, protection de l'environnement; **ecologie**. Ministère de l'Environnement, charge de la protection de la nature et de la défense contre la pollution et les nuisances.*

**Didactique.** *Espèces animales et végétales partageant le même environnement. **Biocénose, biotope**. Environnement spatial, acoustique, thermique. **Par extension:** Conditions extérieures susceptibles d'agir sur le fonctionnement d'un système, d'une entreprise, de l'économie nationale. **Conjuncture.** The word had appeared in the English language in 1921. It has to be noted that the word *milieu*, used in French before the word *environment* was adopted from the Anglo-Saxon culture, also means *le centre, the center*.*

**20.** "Nature", in the same dictionary, covers one and half column, with three rubrics and fourteen definitions. Définition numéro 5 in rubrique II Is " *L'ensemble des choses perçues, visibles, en tant que milieu ou vit l'homme* (note the word « milieu »). *La nature sensible*. Définition 1, in the same rubrique reads « *Principe actif, souvent personnifié, qui anime, organise l'ensemble des choses existantes selon un certain ordre. Les lois de la nature...* Définition 2 : « *Principe fondamental de tout jugement moral, ensemble de règles idéales dont les lois humaines ne sont qu'une illustration imparfaite...L'ensemble de tout ce qui existe...* » There is also the « state of nature », that state which, according to Rousseau, ended when somebody put a fence around a piece of land and declared that it was "his".

**21.** In the biblical sense: God created everything for us; we were rich before we were born. This can be taken as an axiom. We can assume that God created creation and then avoid a debate as to the "truth" of it. It is a useful axiom. For Calvin, the creation was not created for us, but simply for whatever was created. Loving God is to love everything that was created. The "environment" does not have this emotional relationship. Spirituality is love. This fundamental idea has to be reintroduced into our perception of the world. *Laudato Si* does that.

**22.** It was emphasized that within the United Nations itself there is an effort to introduce the concept of "harmony with nature". Since more than a decade, a few Latin American countries managed to keep on the agenda of the General Assembly, under the item on Sustainable Development, a sub-item on Harmony with Nature. Each year, the Assembly adopts a resolution explaining the concept, calling for the use of different sources of knowledge in addressing environmental issues, referring to the World Charter for Nature which was adopted in 1982 and almost immediately put aside by the dominant international discourse, and authorizing a debate in the United Nations with a panel of experts on Earth Day, celebrated throughout the world on the 22d of April.<sup>6</sup> In 2016, this debate was replaced by a virtual dialogue on line, in which the Triglav Circle played an important role.<sup>7</sup> In the 2030 Agenda, there

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<sup>6</sup> For the last resolution of the General Assembly on Harmony with Nature see A/RES/70/208, 22 December 2015

<sup>7</sup> The contributions of 12 members of the Triglav Circle to this virtual dialogue on Harmony with Nature can be found in [www.HarmonywithNatureUN.org](http://www.HarmonywithNatureUN.org) On this home page select "Dialogues." When you get to dialogues select

are a few references to Harmony with Nature. The most significant is that under Goal 12, Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, target 12.8 reads as follows: “By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness to sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature.” This is an opening which can be appropriated, developed and put into practice in the years ahead by all actors on the world scene who are convinced that a drastic change in the way we think and live is imperative.

**23.**Such change is forcefully advocated in the Letter, which is directed to all people, from all faiths, traditions, convictions and personal backgrounds. It says that the planet, the earth is an integral whole, where everything is interconnected. Human intervention inevitably has effects and harmony with the creation has been broken since the very beginning and broken further with the development of human thoughts and activities, including religions. There is no way back to harmony with nature unless nature is “deified” enough to provide us with means against all the forms of anthropomorphisms that have invaded modern the modern culture. Pope Francis tells us that we cannot avoid adding to the rupture that has happened with the emergence of human beings in the world, but that we have the responsibility and the ability to heal that rupture. The essential is to understand and to accept the fact that the earth is a gift that we have inherited. This “gift” does not presume a “giver” in the sense of a personal God (an “anthropocentric God”). It only recognizes that we receive that whole which is a living whole and that we are entrusted with the task to keep it as a life enhancing ho, me, the common home, our common home. The integral ecology proposed by the Letter is the wisdom that is needed to maintain the web of life into which we are placed.

**24.**There were, in this session of the Seminar, a few other expressions of the agreement with the idea that humankind has to place, or replace itself within nature, of which it is an intrinsic part. The earth is our mother, who sustains and governs us: this is a beautiful vision of our human condition and no one can argue with it. Science provides an access to the mysteries and beauties of the universe. But so do poetry, philosophy and simply contemplation, and spiritual insight: let’s not deprive ourselves of these equally valuable sources of knowledge. One has to appeal to the emotions of people and not only to their reason. To live in harmony with nature is a wonderful project and a necessity. It provides true happiness and leads to wisdom. Behind the word “environment” is a culture, a way of being in the world ignoring our limitations, our weaknesses, and considering love, compassion and humility as soft and dispensable values. Behind the word “nature” is a radically different culture, seeking harmony with the self, with the “Other” and with the universe. And there are concrete examples of people living and

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Dialogue 2016 in the list of dialogues. For individual inputs on the Dialogue 2016 home page clique on “Dialogue Inputs.” Go down the lists in individual groups and find Triglav member inputs under Groups: Eco Economics: Stryker, Mandhyan, Diarra. In Group Philosophy and Ethics: BBAudot, Dommen, Smith, Falk, Courtney; In Group Education: Elder; In Group EcoScience: Shingu In Group Theology: Dahl, Raiser.

working today in such harmony. A case in point is the bio-dynamic farm with no external “inputs” such as fertilizers or pesticides and “outputs” of great quality sufficient to provide for the needs of a large number of families. There are now about 2000 such farms in the United States and they are also very present in Germany. They represent a “harmonious” mix of modernity and tradition. In contrast, the famous Green Revolution, initiated in the 1970s, has been a disaster for many people and many countries. It destroyed a number of balances in the natural milieu. It was based simply on a blind reliance on technological innovations and on a shortsighted calculation of costs and benefits. Now emerging, is the Brown Revolution, with a return to the original ways of cultivating, including the production of original seeds. It is a movement that does not mention Mother Earth but emphasized the right to food.

**25.** In the same vein, a vivid description was made of the way people of a region of Africa saw and lived their relations with nature before they were confronted with the European ethos. Essentially, everything was interrelated: the sky, the earth, the trees, the rain, the rivers... And everything was a mystery. Man therefore had to be very careful. He had to have great respect for his surroundings, for his “environment.” He was really part of nature. There was a Master of Water, to watch and regulate its use, a Master of Health... The hunting period was controlled by the chiefs of the communities according to their knowledge of wildlife... And these people had insights into the “functioning” of the universe pre-dating the development of scientific methods of observation. For example, the Dogon people had for more than a thousand years events coinciding with the movements of a star which was recently “discovered” by a European scientist. Harmony with nature was a reality for these people. The concept is not part of a fanciful re-creation of the past.

**26.** The situation of the poor people in Cambodia was also evoked. These people, fishermen in particular, were poor according to the common definition of poverty, but were in fact incredibly rich, in their way of living, in their relations with their surroundings (harmony with nature?), and they were not deprived of the “essentials”, neither in food nor in their social life. Now, because of the construction of dams over the Mekong, the fish are close to extinction and the fishermen are losing their way of life. Everywhere in the world, external forces driven by greed and by a false notion of what constitutes progress destroy perfectly viable communities. The fact is that those living in harmony with nature are more and more marginalized. And, with climate change and global warming, the earth is for many people less and less hospitable, more and more hostile. Is the search for harmony with nature an attempt at reversing that trend?

**27.** Other participants voiced their skepticism, even hostility to this effort at changing the way we see ourselves in the world. Nature, harmony with nature? Buzzwords. Creation? Outdated religious concept. Mother Earth? Language attached to indigenous cultures with a pre-scientific

mentality and used by some delegations in the United Nations to express their discomfort with the process of globalization.

**28.** Overall, however, if some generalization can be made from the small sample of like-minded persons who participated in this Seminar, it seems that the difference between the two concepts, the environment and nature, is, for most people, clear intellectually but unclear in its practical consequences. Would, for instance, the Paris Agreement have more chances to be scrupulously implemented if the international and national discourses and policies were more oriented towards the respect for nature than the protection of the environment? Those who answer this question positively argue that the concept of the “environment” reflects a view of the world, a political philosophy and an ideology that are largely responsible for the problems of our planet. Small changes in this ideology are not and will not be sufficient to reverse current trends. The emphasis on “nature” is part of what Pope Francis calls a “cultural revolution,” which is imperative, perhaps for the survival of humankind and certainly for preventing major catastrophes. It seems that the real “cleavages” are there: reformism or change of course? Even if desirable, is a change of course possible? Judgements on the state of the world and on what needs to be done are, evidently, shaped by sensibilities, emotions, personal experiences as well as by knowledge and reasoning. The Letter insists on the usefulness – indeed the necessity – of honest dialogues, at all levels.

**29.** The interest of having an interreligious dialogue on the subjects treated in the Letter, already expressed under the first item of this Seminar, was further discussed. It was pointed out that the ideas presented in *Laudato Si*, were not altogether new (for instance the World Council of Churches had initiated reflections on such subjects that the Catholic Church had been reluctant to join), but, precisely, this Encyclical Letter was introducing a major revolution into catholic thought itself. The Letter was still linked to the catholic view of world affairs, and this had to be seen positively given the major importance of this faith, but it had also a universal message. Bringing together representatives of different religions would be a good first step. And, it was noted, a start could be the reading the text together with friends of different faiths, including Bahai friends, Muslim friends, and see the reactions of all.

**30.** A topic of great interest for an interreligious dialogue – or any dialogue on the problems of the world – is the question of anthropocentrism, a philosophical attitude present in all religious traditions, particularly but not exclusively in the Christian tradition and also in the Jewish and Muslim traditions. Even Buddhism, albeit to a limited extent, is affected by this placing of Man at the center of the universe, giving humanity license and even the duty to dominate and use at his guise everything in the creation. Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si*, denounces this philosophy that has permeated the world and is responsible for the “rupture” of Man with Nature. Much work is needed to eliminate human arrogance without falling into a practical relativism also

condemned in the Letter. And, anthropocentrism is linked with an anthropocentric view of God, a God distributing rewards and punishments. In this context, the reading of Spinoza was recommended. Also, it was pointed out that C.S. Lewis, notably in *Mere Christianity*, offers a very useful sort of compendia on the perspectives of different religions on a list of basic concepts.

**31.** Should international, interreligious and “inter-philosophical” dialogues aim at an agreement on a “global ethic”? The need for a coherent and universally shared set of values and norms is often mentioned. Why not have an international conference to elaborate such a text, said a participant. It was pointed out, however, that there had been such attempts in the past, in the United Nations, notably in the 1980s under the leadership of Hans Kung, and with very limited success. Would it have more chances of success if a text such as the 2030 Agenda was taken as a framework from which explicit and implicit values and norms will be “extracted” and, in some fashion, “codified”? Perhaps, but it might be useful to first analyze the reasons for the decline of the normative function of the United Nations, starting with international law in general and including human rights law. Existing legal instruments, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its Covenants are neglected and more and more often violated with impunity. It might be contended that to add another comparable text, which in the current intellectual and political context would certainly not be a treaty, would be a “fuite en avant” rather than a positive step. Moreover, it was argued, there is no need for another international text. What matters most is that each of us criticizes, improves, enriches one’s own vision, through discussions like the present one.

**32.** The suggestion of an interreligious dialogue in the United Nations forum gave rise to comments on this organization and on some aspects of the 2030 Agenda. To be a good and effective institution the United Nations should concentrate on two related missions: it should gather facts and become a place with unquestionable objectivity in the knowledge of all important aspects of the world situation; and it should play the role of a think tank for the world. Both functions – respecting and gathering facts and conducting reflection and research – are badly needed in our interdependent world. In some domains, for instance humanitarian issues, the United Nations is still today a very good source of data. This discussion on facts and the UN prompted the remark that we were indeed living in a “post-fact era”. Facts no longer matter. And for this situation the media has a huge responsibility.

**33.** Even if we are taking seriously the 2030 Agenda, we should avoid any kind of “UN centrism.” This organization has to operate in complementarity with others. It may be irreplaceable, but a lot of good and useful actions are happening outside its control, through all sorts of initiatives and institutions which do not correspond to the traditional models of the “public” and “private” sectors. Even more pointedly, it was affirmed that for the implementation of the Sustainable

Development Goals it was the private sector that was often taking the right initiatives and having the leading role. Many companies and corporations were adjusting their strategies to contribute to development and social progress. The United Nations, national governments and non-governmental organizations had to “put their act together” if they wanted to stay relevant. Referring to Goal 12, Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns: can we achieve this critical goal through the capitalist economic system by directing investment and economic activity in the right direction and steering away from the wrong direction? Can profit be made right as opposed to just making money? Implicit in this question was the sentiment, or the conviction, that, though uncertain, this path was the only possible.

**34.**In the same spirit, it was said that the concept of nature was not necessarily at odds with economic rationality and investment. In many specific domains it is possible to give a value to nature and to what it brings to people. The organization *Nature Conservancy*, for example, has done considerable good work in the Amazon region. Water Funds have been created in various communities. Through sophisticated financial tools investment is gathered from water users and directed towards conservation of key lands upstream that filter and regulate the water supply. At the same time, habitat for native plants and wildlife is preserved.

**35.**The conversation under this item also touched upon the questions of the universalism of the 2030 Agenda and of the traditional North-South division of the world. The following points were made:

- The 2030 Agenda is presented as “universal”. Is this a fair claim? Truly, a number of countries and organizations of the civil society participated in its preparation and it was adopted by consensus in the General Assembly of the 194 Member States of the United Nations. Also, its 17 Goals are formally addressed to all nations and all people. But, a majority of the targets attached to the goals are clearly referring to the developing countries. With the exception of the goals on the environment, particularly climate change with the Paris Agreement, there is no evidence that the affluent countries feel directly implicated by the 2030 Agenda. “Development,” even qualified as “sustainable” remains a problem of the “South”. And so does “poverty”. A reading of the statements made by heads of State and Government after the adoption of the Agenda confirms this observation (see Explanatory Note, page 10).
- Could it be considered that the North-South division of the world which permeates the Agenda represents a form of universalism? After all, financial aid, transfer of technologies, trading arrangements, debt reduction and a few other similar measures are forms of solidarity and universalism. Universalism does not imply equality, neither in power nor in wealth. Yes, responded a few participants, but, apart from the elusive

notion of sustainability, the glue keeping together the 2030 Agenda is in fact the current world economic and financial system, or global capitalism, which was put in place in the 1980s through the neo-liberal counterrevolution. This system, which was not made explicit nor criticized in the Agenda, will continue to prevail unless an improbable ideological change in the major powers. Because its values are privatization and competition, it is “glue” that will prevent rather than facilitate the realization of the goals of the agenda, notably Goal 12 (changes in patterns of production and consumption and changes in life styles) and Goal 10 (reduction of inequalities). It is this system and its values that are condemned by *Laudato Si*.

- With a similar political and intellectual orientation, it was asserted that the North-South division had never been so profound and so pervasive. Not only the poor but also the small countries are subjected to the domination of the affluent and powerful. This domination is exerted through governments, through international organizations, including the United Nations, and also through private entities such as corporations. Even individuals, with money, can with impunity plunder the resources of weak countries and communities. Concrete examples were given. This is a particularly pernicious facet of “globalization” that is hardly mentioned by the media. The 2030 Agenda, with its traditional measures of assistance to the South will not change this situation.
- From a more positive angle, the North-South divide was described as indeed different from the time of the New International Economic Order but, in some respects, less severe, more nuanced, with more opportunities for real solidarity, fraternization and concrete improvements in living conditions. This is because what was called the North-South “dialogue”, increasingly conducted by organizations which are neither states nor corporations, has fundamentally changed. It is a multiform dialogue, no limited to the rooms of international organizations such as the United Nations. There is frenzy of initiatives, not always well coordinated, but, on the whole, benevolent, pure in their motives and reasonably efficient in their actions. Many of these initiatives involve local people and are free of any connotation of paternalism or imperialism.
- Still from a different perspective, it was emphasized that the North-South division of the world, which tends globally to be obscured by the resurgence of other political, cultural and even religious divides, is re-created at the national level. In “developed” as well as “developing” countries the gap between the “have” and the “have not” (giving to these expressions a more than financial meaning) is steadily increasing. Each society has now its “center” and its “periphery.” The concept of social classes, which had disappeared from the political and sociological language, is regaining pertinence and favor. It is now accurate to evoke a world elite and world of the poor, or, more generally, of the excluded (the latter is the concept used in the Letter).

**36.**The intellectual and political framework proposed by Pope Francis to guide what he sees as a necessary “change of course” is an integral ecology. In the Letter this approach is introduced in the following manner: *“Since everything is closely interrelated, and today’s problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an **integral ecology**, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions.”* Unfortunately, the Seminar did not find the time to discuss this concept. It was simply noted that it had five main dimensions: environmental, economic and social ecology; cultural ecology; ecology of daily life; the principle of the common good; and, justice between the generations (see the five sections of Chapter Four, *Integral Ecology*, of the Letter).

**37.**At the end of the session on this Item 2, the moderator asked participants to highlight in a few words their “sentiments”, or “impressions”, or “judgments” on the discussion.

Excerpts follow:

*We live in a post-fact era, with a key and negative role of the media; to “balance” a reasonable view with a lie is a strange conception of objectivity; the “Brexit” is a perfect example; the privatization movement has been an unmitigated catastrophe for the majority of the people, and it continues to be implemented.*

*The world needs alternative thinking; the World Social Forum is gone, the South Centre is weakened...The Letter says things which were said before...The dominant ideology and the dominant power prevent the needed “change of course.”*

*The United Nations should become a convener of thinkers; the Paris Agreement has a chance to come into force, and, perhaps, a chance to be implemented, with a lot of caveats, for instance the result of some elections; we have to rely on the realization of the simple idea that it can be profitable to do the right thing.*

*Pope Francis calls for a “cultural revolution”; everything starts with ourselves, our thoughts and our actions; need for political imagination; need to develop a new language; see the state of democracy today; the Letter recognizes that there are times of regression; the Agenda does not.*

*It seems that the Letter has been well circulated and continues to be in demand; the Agenda also has to be widely disseminated, in spite of its weaknesses; discussions like the one in La Garde have a useful role and should be repeated and multiplied; notably, the information flow should circulate between the academic communities and those involved in concrete work; the multiple dialogues recommended in the Letter are critical.*

*This group, and the Triglav Circle in general, has too much interest in the past; we must look forward, take the world as it is and act to improve it.*



*The two documents – the Agenda and the Letter- need each other; they ought to be integrated, part by part; the Pope’s teaching is something that we all need to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, whether we live in the developed or in the developing world; universal policy documents are indispensable.*

*Let’s avoid, to the extent possible, “buzzwords”; international documents provide us with big empty boxes that we have to try to fill with precise, specific commitments; a global holistic approach is valid, provided we specify what will be the content of such framework, and provided that it is periodically revised; given the complexity of the problems no individual can hope to make an outstanding contribution, but, according to a Polish proverb, with five cooks you will get nothing to eat: there is need for a leading cook; collective work won’t achieve much; role of individual persons cannot be over-emphasized.*

*Role of individuals? Yes indeed. Remember Raoul Prebisch, Maurice Strong... There existed at that time institutions that allowed these strong personalities to project and implement some of their thoughts. Today, the dominant institutions do not allow such persons to act.*

*Good things are happening, in both the non-profit and for-profit worlds; many investors are seriously considering the impact of their investments; numerous companies driven first by profit are becoming popular vehicles for the realization of socially useful objectives; this is particularly the case for the struggle to limit climate change and its effects; there is also a strong movement towards transparency; pragmatism does not mean conservatism or mediocrity; one can be both capitalist and idealist; we need a theory of change to “integrate” all these forces... We need an inter-generational dialogue.*

*The generation coming now to adulthood and responsibilities is a generation of “feelers”; this does not mean sentimentalism, or softness, but openness to words and actions where generosity of the mind and of the heart informs realism, honesty and efficiency. A purely technocratic discourse is alien to this generation; and so is a purely romantic discourse, or, a fortiori a “return to the past” attitude. The Letter speaks to this generation.*

*In English, the word “deprived” says more than the word “poor”. If you want to read again the Brundtland report and to enrich it with the integral ecology advocated by Pope Francis, you should take a leaf out of the book of such countries as Ecuador and Bolivia and insist on respecting and preserving the cycles of nature. This ought to be the overriding objective of our time.*

*The empty boxes of the Agenda can and should be used; we should look at best practices, at concrete examples of successful policies; In any case, the Letter and the Agenda are useful and complementary; and, inter-generational exchanges are most important.*

*There is a contradiction between the reduction of poverty (as understood in the Agenda) and the protection of the environment. Current development policies are harmful to nature and will remain so until a dramatic change in mindsets. We should analyze the differences between the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 21. Is the latest an impoverished mimicry of the oldest? With our interest for the global and the “macro” we should always keep in mind that “things” are happening at the local level, in the “terroirs”.*

### **Item 3: *The common good***

**38.**In the Letter, the common good is one of the elements of an integral ecology and a thread of the “lines of approach and action” proposed by Pope Francis to overcome “the ethical, cultural and spiritual crisis of modernity.” It is “a central and unifying principle of social ethics”. It is a “principle” implying “respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development”; having to do with “the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups applying the principle of subsidiarity”; it calls “for social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice”; and, it is “a notion that extends to future generations” ( paragraphs 156 to 159, section IV of Chapter Four). The Seminar appeared to have no reservation with this understanding of the principle of the common good.

**39.**There was clear unanimity, however, to consider the “definition” of the common good (given in paragraph 156 of the Letter) as obscure and confusing. It reads as follows: “The common good is the sum of those conditions of social life that allows social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment.”<sup>8</sup> The elements of the principle of the common good mentioned above are by themselves perfectly clear and sufficient to guide public and private actions.

**40.**Apart from this brief exchange on the principle of the common good and its definition, the debate under this item concentrated on one question, the current role of religion and faith on matters of development, which was introduced by a development practitioner who is at the same time a minister of the Christian faith. What was a “development taboo” has become the “new normal”: it is now impossible to conceive, plan and implement development, humanitarian and advocacy initiatives without meaningfully engaging religious leaders and communities.<sup>9</sup> This is particularly the case in Africa, but other regions are experiencing the same phenomenon. A number of governments and international organizations have taken note of

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<sup>8</sup> This definition was elaborated by the *Second Vatican Ecumenical Council* (see footnote 122 of the Letter)

<sup>9</sup> It seems that the World Bank, under the leadership of James Wolfensohn, was the first to adopt this new strategy.

this growing meeting of interests and they are actively supporting efforts to better understand how “religious resources” can be harnessed for development effectiveness and sustainability.<sup>10</sup> A few years ago, the question in development circles was “should we engage with faith actors?” Today the question is “how to engage better”?

**41.**The reasons for this new situation are numerous. It shows a better recognition of the facts on the ground: in some countries and communities, a large majority of the population are active members of churches and the leaders of these churches have a great authority and influence; another example: in a country of East-Africa between sixty and seventy per cent of health institutions are owned by churches. A second reason is that religious organizations are generally well cognizant of the needs and problems of the people, and their leaders are trusted—at least generally much more than politicians and members of the state administration. Related is the type of rapports that representatives of aid agencies are able to have with these faith-based organizations that are presumed to be more interested in concrete programs and projects than in issues such as national sovereignty or North-South imbalances. An also related reason is the remarkable ideological shift of praise for the private sector and mistrust for everything public that has engulfed the world since a few decades. The more recent and equally remarkable larger presence of religion on the world scene is certainly an added explanation. And, the prevalent insecurity and atmosphere of violence that marks our planet is perhaps another reason for the increased cooperation between organizations and individuals sharing a sincere desire for peace.

**42.**All participants recognized the importance of this enhanced partnership between religious organizations and development agencies. It was said that this partnership had the potential for changing the whole development discourse. It should not be forgotten that the development practitioners were on the demanding side. The churches and other religious institutions are asked for help because development aid has been conceived in a technocratic manner and its results are often limited and sometimes perverse in terms of welfare of the “targeted” populations. It is easier, for instance,] to evoke problems of corruption with representatives of the civil society than with government officials. And, for those who are anxious to see the teachings of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* shape the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, what more reliable transmitters could be found than religious and spiritual leaders and organizations? Besides, such influence does not have to be limited to the countries classified as “developing” and “least developed”. There are in affluent secular countries many people who are hearing “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”.

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<sup>10</sup> A prominent example is the creation by the United Nations of the Inter-Agency Task-Force for Engagement with Faith-based Organizations. Also, the European Union has elaborated guidelines for the cooperation with religious organizations.

**43.** A question was raised on the extent of the participation of organizations of the Islamic faith in this dialogue with development agencies. The example of Mali, a country with a Ministry of Religious Affairs, was given as a positive answer. For instance all religious organizations of this country have participated in the preparation of the Paris Conference. Another factual question related to the involvement of traditional religions. Again with the example of Mali, it was acknowledged that the voice of the Dogon, a community with a great cultural and spiritual tradition was not very audible. The established religions, Christianity and Islam, tend to monopolize the dialogue with national and international authorities.

**44.** More pointed questions and comments were also made:

- Is this cooperation working both ways? Is this really a dialogue, a partnership with mutual influence and mutual learning? Are the churches and other religious groups listening to these representatives of development agencies (now very diverse and certainly not ideologically monolithic as they were at the time of the “structural adjustment programmes) and questioning their own ways of thinking?
- This question is particularly relevant for the protection and promotion of human rights. Not all churches and certainly not all religions are in agreement with the human rights movement and texts initiated with the Universal Declaration and its two covenants and continued under the aegis of the United Nations. Examples of rejection of recognized rights by religious organizations and their adepts abound and seem to become more numerous. A precious universalism and humanism is embodied in the human rights movement and in the Charter of the United Nations. This philosophy is today under attack, from diverse quarters. Development practitioners have to choose carefully their “partners”.
- Where is the evidence that churches and other religious organizations are close to the people, listen to them, understand their needs and are particularly concerned about their welfare and the fulfillment of their potentials? The past of religions offer the best and the worst. And so does their present. In particular, their past and their present on issues of war and peace are legitimate sources of concern.

**45.** Those questions and concerns are perfectly legitimate, said the participant who had introduced the issue of the new relationship between faith organizations and development agencies. The risk of the latter being coopted by the former is indeed high. But in an increasing number of situations there is no choice. Rather, the choice is abandoning people who are in dire need of help, or using those who are available to deliver effectively this help. Particularly in the Eastern and Southern regions of Africa, religious communities are the main provider of services in rural areas. They are the only backbones of societies that have collapsed or are on the verge of collapsing. Nice ideas on government responsibility, good governance, people’s

participation are at odds with the reality on the grounds. There are many examples of failure to deliver humanitarian aid because wrong intermediaries were chosen. Recourse to faith-based organizations is often the only possibility. Often also, it is a choice because most of them are reliable and sincerely interested in the well-being of their communities. And, coming back to the Sustainable Development Goals, in many countries their elaboration was truly debated at various levels. People have been involved as they were never before. This is of real value, in itself.

**46.** With regard to the question of values it was recalled that a few decades ago the World Council of Churches had conducted discussions about development cooperation and the struggle against the dominant secular view of development and the exclusive focus on economic growth. Inspired by an Indian economist of the Gandhi tradition, the Council had elaborated an understanding of development as a process of radical change involving the people themselves. Together with self-reliance, people's participation was seen as the primary driving force of development, which could not be a process induced from outside but the ever changing product of the energy and wisdom of people themselves. And these energies had to be informed, oriented by the principle of social justice, a principle that had to be proclaimed and applied at the national, regional and local levels. Only under these conditions could economic growth become the struggle of the poor themselves and the engine of development. These ideas have not lost their relevance and, as already noted, the teachings of the Encyclical Letter are in the same intellectual and political tradition.

**47.** Also, it was pointed out that the discussion on the role of religions and faith-based organizations reminds us that the whole issue of development is about the fundamental values held by people and the values that inform the spirit of the time and that have to be discussed, examined and fostered to serve as a framework to all decisions, public and private, at the global and local levels. The moral/ethical dimension of the problems we face and of the policies we undertake cannot be ignored. As already noted, during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there had been an attempt through a sort of world parliament of religions to articulate on an inter-religious basis a core framework of a global ethic that will not be attached to any specific religious tradition but both basic enough and open enough to serve as a guide to decision-making. As an interested host, the United Nations was involved in that effort. And it had been taken further by the Council of Churches to develop a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities that would parallel the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The idea was that rights refer to essential values and can be misused unless they are complemented by accountability and responsibility.

**48.** For reasons that ought to be analyzed, including perhaps by the Triglav Circle, these endeavors were hardly successful. But this does not mean that they were not trying to fulfill

real needs. The 2030 Agenda, also for reasons that ought to be identified and discussed, shied away from any explicit reference to the moral, ethical, spiritual and even cultural dimensions of the problems it addressed and the goals it set. The Letter has both these dimensions and practical recommendations. Since the Agenda is an open and flexible instrument, is it not a perfect opportunity for an enrichment of the dry intergovernmental document by the inspired pronouncement of a spiritual leader? Interreligious and inter-philosophical dialogues on the views expressed in the Letter would increase its credibility. And the enrichment would be on concepts, for example development, or progress, or human fulfillment, as well as on precise goals and targets, and would have to take place at different levels, including hopefully in the United Nations and its various programmes and agencies. One has to remember that the Letter insists on the necessity of dialogues.<sup>11</sup>

**49.**In the course of the conversation on this third item a few additional points were made:

- Pope Francis in his encyclical reminds us of the centrality of power in human affairs. Power, its use and misuse, the understanding of its nature and sources, the forms of its exercise, are essential components of a reflection on the state of the world. When we talked about development we are dealing not only with a technical process of generating economic growth or delivering health care or education; we are dealing with the issue of power in society. The values that can help control the exercise of power are supremely important. The search for the common good can be seen as an effort to provide a frame of reference that constantly undercuts the misuse of the sources of power.
- The importance of mobilizing different sources of knowledge was reiterated. Because it relies only on instrumental rationality, the Agenda is a technocratic document. In the language of the Letter, it is an expression of the “technocratic paradigm.” In that sense, the Agenda is not realistic, for it neglects the dimensions of life and society, and of course of development, which are apprehended by other disciplines than economics and other source of knowledge than experimental science. This reminds us of the “chest-less man” of CS Lewis. Let’s hear Pope Francis: “A science which would offer solutions to the great issues would have to take into account the data generated by other fields of knowledge, including philosophy and social ethics; but this a difficult habit to acquire today. Nor are there ethical horizons to which one can appeal” (paragraph 110).

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<sup>11</sup> “The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that “realities are greater than ideas” (paragraph 201; the quote is from Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 24 November 2013)

- The discourse on human responsibility is not part of the mainstream in development and humanitarian circles. It is more or less confined in philosophical and religious reflections and debates. And these tend to be in their own “boxes.”
- The notion of global solidarity is present in both the 2030 Agenda and the Letter. It was observed that the current process of globalization, driven by global capitalism, coincides with, or is partly responsible for a fragmentation of the world: a political and cultural fragmentation which manifests itself by a renewal of nationalism, a surge of “ethnic” and religious conflicts and a growing desire of people to seek protection in their immediate community. The “external” solidarity is weak and the “internal” solidarity is also shaken. The “have” and the “have not” are separate classes in the world as in most nations. Young people, however, seem to be aspiring to a world of peace and solidarity. The situation of the refugees was also mentioned. And the progress towards more solidarity was linked to good governance, at the national and international levels.
- Human dignity, the intrinsic dignity of every human being, the absolute that is the respect for the dignity of all and each of us, were values and principles repeatedly highlighted during this Seminar. Human dignity is at the core of the human rights philosophy and legal instruments. It is above religious and political cleavages. Respect for human dignity is the mark of a decent political regime and decent society. It is a moral imperative. In the Letter, Pope Francis extends this notion of dignity to the “environment” when he writes that “the intrinsic dignity of the world is compromised” when “the technological mind see nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts (...) and views the cosmos similarly as a mere “space” into which objects can be thrown with complete indifference” (paragraph 115).

#### Item 4: ***The follow-up of this Seminar***

50. There seemed to be a tentative agreement among the participants that this type of conversation should be continued. A possible subject was not evoked but it was agreed that the Circle will meet again next year, the second week-end of July 2017, in Nievre, in Ougny or near Ougny.

51. Although these were not mentioned during the debate it seems appropriate to conclude this rapport with quotes from ***Laudato Si***:

***“The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change(...) Humanity still has the ability to work together in building our common home*** (paragraph 13, our underlinings).

*"May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope."*(paragraph 244)

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