



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO DR ANGELA MERKEL
CHANCELLOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY****

*To Her Excellency
Dr Angela MERKEL
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany*

On 17 July 2006, at the conclusion of the Saint Petersburg Summit, you announced that under your Presidency, the Group of the seven leading economic powers plus Russia (G8) would continue to keep the question of global poverty on its agenda. Subsequently, on 18 October last, the German Federal Government stated that assistance to Africa would be a key priority at the Heiligendamm Summit.

I therefore write to you in order to express the gratitude of the Catholic Church and my own personal appreciation for these announcements.

I welcome the fact that the question of poverty, with specific reference to Africa, now appears on the agenda of the G8; indeed, it should be given the highest attention and priority, for the sake of poor and rich countries alike. The fact that the German Presidency of the G8 coincides with the Presidency of the European Union presents a unique opportunity to tackle this issue. I am confident that Germany will exercise positively the leadership role that falls to her with regard to this question of global importance that affects us all.

At our meeting on 28 August last, you assured me that Germany shares the Holy See's concern regarding the inability of rich countries to offer the poorest countries, especially those from Africa, financial and trade conditions capable of promoting their lasting development.

The Holy See has repeatedly insisted that, while the Governments of poorer countries have a responsibility with regard to good governance and the elimination of poverty, the active

involvement of international partners is indispensable. This should not be seen as an "extra" or as a concession which could be postponed in the face of pressing national concerns. It is a grave and unconditional moral responsibility, founded on the unity of the human race, and on the common dignity and shared destiny of rich and poor alike, who are being drawn ever closer by the process of globalization.

Trade conditions favourable to poor countries, including, above all, broad and unconditional access to markets, should be made available and guaranteed in lasting and reliable ways.

Provision must also be made for the rapid, total and unconditional cancellation of the external debt of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Measures should also be adopted to ensure that these countries do not fall once again into situations of unsustainable debt.

Developed countries must also recognize and implement fully the commitments they have made with regard to external aid.

Moreover, a substantial investment of resources for research and for the development of medicines to treat AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other tropical diseases is needed. In this regard, the first and foremost scientific challenge facing developed countries is the discovery of a vaccine against malaria. There is also a need to make available medical and pharmaceutical technology and health care expertise without imposing legal or economic conditions.

Finally, the international community must continue to work for the substantial reduction of both the legal and the illegal arms trade, the illegal trade of precious raw materials, and the flight of capital from poor countries, as well as for the elimination of the practices of money-laundering and corruption of officials of poor countries.

While these challenges should be undertaken by all members of the international community, the G8 and the European Union should take the lead.

People from different religions and cultures throughout the world are convinced that achieving the goal of eradicating extreme poverty by the year 2015 is one of the most important tasks in today's world. Moreover, they also hold that such an objective is indissolubly linked to world peace and security. They look to the Presidency, held by the German Government in the months ahead, to ensure that the G8 and the European Union undertake the measures necessary to overcome poverty. They are ready to play their part in such efforts and they support your commitment in a spirit of solidarity.

Invoking God's blessings on the work of the G8 and the European Union under the German Presidency, I avail myself of the occasion to renew to Your Excellency the assurance of my

highest consideration.

From the Vatican, 16 December 2006.

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