



THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS AND THE SEARCH FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS FOR
THE RENEWAL OF THE CITY OF NAPOLI

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Your Eminence, Cardinal Sepe.

Archbishops,

Distinguished Scholars and Academics.

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I consider it a sterling honour to have been asked to speak to this audience this afternoon, on the occasion of the Civil Jubilee of the City of Napoli, in the presence of such a Distinguished Audience.

Unlike the 1911 Civil Jubilee, it is fortunate that this time round, our thoughts are not dampened by the loss of so many lives from an epidemic. This time the urban renewal of Napoli will be set against Global Climate Change, and Global Warming, threats which we believe we can face more daringly, because they are slower to take effect thus giving us more time to adjust.

Looking back of the events of 1911, and thereafter, it is most impressive to learn how the urban renewal following the various epidemics was guided by good scientific principles, some of which can still be applied in today's circumstances, many decades down the road. It is therefore truly rewarding that the Church, then and now has volunteered to take the position of leadership, to guide the operations, working as it always does, with the people, and the scientific community.

THE THREAT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

When we talk of “sustainable development”, we are referring to development which is within our ken to achieve. The Bariloche Model on development was one of the first to link the need for development to be accompanied with the concept of sustainability, and it was soon followed by the Bruntland Report which was unequivocal in advocating development to be guided by equity, and sustainability. The concept of sustainability was in turn based on “inter-generational equity”.

In the words of the World Commission on Environment and Development, sustainable development is that development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. In other words we are talking about development which calls for simultaneous progress in four dimensions, namely,

- (1) Economic
- (2) Human
- (3) Environmental, and
- (4) Technological

It is these same principles which we will be forced to apply to future development of the City of Napoli, with the realization that economic development cannot proceed without due respect for environmental imperatives, i.e. one cannot neglect environmental constraints, and still

benefit from economic development in a sustainable manner. The causes and effects of climate change are closely interwoven with equity on the one hand and inequity on the other, in respect of our use of the global commons.

As we talk about the future prosperity of Napoli, we should remember that prosperity in the developed North is intimately linked with the continued use of global resources, which have led to the pollution of the global environment, with certain undesirable consequences such as:

- Production of over 70% of global emissions of GHGs, though now there are new players such as China and India
- Those living in undeveloped lands in the south have been left to suffer the consequences of pollution
- Consumption of most of the Earth's mineral resources

Conflict between environmental requirements, such as ecological, (including biodiversity), and economic growth, and conflict between the need to conserve, and if need be, preserve, certain natural resources, and the use of the same resources, must be avoided at all costs.

The best statement of this hypothesis is that if we expect sustainable development to take place, and to continue, it cannot be done in a situation where we are ignoring the need for parallel development of human resources, and it may call for the re-definition, and subsequent transformation of the existing industrial base, and the development and

diffusion of environmentally friendly processes, for the benefit of present, and future generations.

It is truly wonderful that for the City of Napoli, the entry into the second Jubilee is being marked by a short pause for thought, before embarking on the next stage of development.

It is important to warn that going for sustainability may not maximize market value, because such maximization consists of an interpretation of welfare criteria, and that when we are dealing with long-lived environmental projects, discounted cost-benefit analysis is not adequate. In the meantime there will be immediate environmental issues to be dealt with such as

- (i) The growing scarcity of freshwater
- (ii) Loss of productive agricultural land
- (iii) The downward spiral of poverty in the developing countries.

CLIMATE CHANGE RELATED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION FOR NAPOLI

A city like Napoli, which is also a port must be aware of risks of disasters coming from climate variability, and climate change. After the release of the Fourth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), it is now a fact that “global warming is unequivocal”. Climate change is likely to be accompanied by disasters arising from an increase in extreme events. In that process, giant human settlements like

Napoli must be prepared for disasters by putting forward concrete plans for disaster risk aversion.

The UN ISDR is currently busy recruiting cities around the world to prepare them for disaster risk reduction, as part of their planned response to climate change. Any such proposals put on the table must be ecologically sustainable in the long run.

Secondly, Italy alongside her partners in the EU are participating in climate change mitigation, which involves reducing the emission of GHGs into the earth's atmosphere. Napoli must naturally fall within those national obligations in the process of rebuilding during the second Jubilee, which the present meeting is trying to address. EU members are committed to climate change mitigation in their national development strategies and environmental management which involve among others,

- ❖ Information to the public
- ❖ Understanding the expected climate change impacts
- ❖ Planning with climate change in mind
- ❖ Developing appropriate cost-benefit and environmental management
- ❖ Promoting and developing new technologies for the mitigation of impacts of climate change

In detail, Napoli's response to climate change will involve a host of other things which the urban renewal programme should be aware of. These include

- ❖ Need to control coastal development to minimize the risks to human life of sea-level rise
- ❖ Control of land reclamation to reduce the areas of coastal lowlands susceptible to inundation
- ❖ Control of groundwater exploitation to reduce subsidence and salt water intrusion
- ❖ Zoning of lowlands into high-, medium-, and low risk categories
- ❖ Strategic industries such as electricity generation should be located away from high risk lowlands
- ❖ Suspend all dumping/storage of toxic and radio-active waste in high risk zones in coastal lowlands susceptible to long-term inundation, and sea-level rise

Climate change related sea level rise will inflict costly adjustments to port installations which must be planned for during the city's renewal programme. Most of these can be taken care of by advanced monitoring using satellite technology, accompanied by coastal land use planning. Such monitoring will naturally include an inventory of the occurrence of storm surges on the Mediterranean coastal areas of Napoli with the view to understanding historical shoreline behavior.

In the final analysis, Napoli must avoid,

- ❖ Increased inundation of reclaimed lands
- ❖ Accelerating coastal erosion
- ❖ Increased risk of flood disasters
- ❖ Disruption of drainage systems
- ❖ Saltwater intrusion in groundwater, rivers, bays, and farmland
- ❖ Disruption(ecological) of fisheries, wildlife habitats, and of the general ecological balance
- ❖ Loss of recreational beaches

The IPCC (2007) has emphasized the fact that coastal areas are experiencing the adverse consequences of hazards related to climate and sea level rise. As a rule, coasts will be exposed to increased risks, including coastal erosion over coming decades due to climate change and sea level rise. In addition, the impact of climate change on coasts is exacerbated by increasing human pressures. Adaptation costs are much less than the costs of inaction.

Napoli must plan in acceptance of the fact that the unavailability of sea level rise, even in the longer term, frequently conflicts with present day human development patterns and trends.

NON-CLIMATE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES FOR NAPOLI'S CONSIDERATION

The nation of Italy is located in a very interesting geological location in Europe, being found between the Alps and the African continent. This location between the African Plate and the European Plate which has led in the geological past to the formation of the Alpine Chain, means that much of Italy is tectonically unstable, as evidenced by the series of volcanoes in this southern area of the country. In a situation like this, earthquakes are a common feature, and there should always be preparations for disasters linked to the probability of earthquakes, as part of the development plan of the city of Napoli.

Other environmental issues are man-made such as dump sites, landfills, as well as other sites for waste disposal, which are a source of methane emissions into the atmosphere. Planners are aware of the problems surrounding these, and should take them into consideration in the quest for a clean environment.

WHY NAPOLI MUST CONTINUE TO STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE

Napoli has been described as “a premier city that offers a high quality of life exemplified by cleanliness, safety, and well-maintained homes and businesses, distinctive architecture, tree-lined streets, landscaped medians, a high level of municipal services, environmental corridors, pristine beaches, and tropical climate.” In a publication I consulted entitled “Preserving Naples: A Vision plan to keep the best of the past

while building a better community for the future”, I saw the inspiration that led to convening of this meeting we are having to-day. It lies at the root of sustainable development based on the current natural endowments of the city. What is important to add is that in using the natural resources, the present generation should not compromise the needs of future generations.

The Plan talks of

- (i) Efforts to make Napoli the green jewel of the Southwest Florida;
- (ii) To maintain an extraordinary quality of life for the residents
- (iii) To strengthen the economy, and the healthy life of the city
- (iv) To maintain and enhance the governance capacity for public service and leadership

All the above can be achieved when the authorities work closely with all the stakeholders. Finally the emphasis on “green development” is in keeping with the global trend to reduce our carbon footprints on the earth’s ecosystems. In response to climate change, there is a determined move to switch to low-carbon economics wherever this is possible. David Satterthwaite of the UN Population Division asserts that well-governed cities can have very low greenhouse gas emissions per person relative to

their quality of life. He goes on to emphasise that “the core of sustainable development is combining very good living conditions with an ecologically sustainable draw on the planets’ resources and life support systems.” He goes on to add that cities must learn to adapt to climate change, and one way of doing this is to drastically cut the carbon foot-prints of each inhabitant of the cities.

Finally, it is important to say that whenever, and wherever, Governments work closely with communities, the prospects for success are extremely high because it results in ownership by the communities thus served. This is what we call in Africa “grassroots development”.

THANK YOU