Vatican
Vatican News
Children in line for food.

Displaced Palestinian children wait to receive free food at a tent camp, amid food shortages in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, Feb. 27, 2024. (OSV News/Reuters/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa)

Gina Christian

View Author Profile



OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

United Nations — June 26, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Peace is "more than just the absence of war," but instead a commitment to human flourishing — and one required more than ever as conflict and global defense spending soar, said the Holy See's permanent mission to the United Nations.

Msgr. Marco Formica, the mission's chargé d'affaires, delivered a June 23 statement on behalf of the Vatican nuncio Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, at the U.N. Security Council's open debate on poverty, underdevelopment and conflict, and the implications of those interconnected concerns on international peace and security.

Reading the statement, Formica cited the U.N.'s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which names poverty as "the greatest global challenge."

The World Bank Group's 2024 "Poverty, Prosperity, and Planet Report" notes that efforts to reduce global poverty have "slowed to a near standstill," with almost 700 million people, or 8.5% of the world's population, living on less than $2.15 per day.

Some 3.5 billion people, or 44% of the world's population, live on less than $6.85 per day. The report found that "if growth does not accelerate and become more inclusive, it will take decades to eradicate extreme poverty and more than a century to lift people above the $6.85 per day poverty line."

Conflict and poverty "often exacerbate each other in a destructive cycle," said the U.N. in its concept note, or proposal overview, for the meeting.

"Conflict directly aggravates poverty by adversely affecting the economy and widening inequality," said the U.N. in its note. "Conflicts diminish a population's productive capacity through the direct loss of life; damage to schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure; and the disruption of economic activities, including decreased agricultural output and reduced manufacturing capacity."

The Holy See's statement said the root causes of poverty, which nations have a "moral responsibility" to address, "are frequently associated with injustice, exclusion and the denial of fundamental rights."

Advertisement

It observed that as early as 1967, St. Paul VI — writing in his encyclical Populorum Progressio — "prophetically declared that 'development is the new name for peace.'"

"This vision reminds us that peace is not just the absence of war, but rather the active promotion of human fraternity, cooperation and shared prosperity for all," said Formica, reading the statement. "In this spirit, the Holy See maintains that integral human development represents not only a moral imperative for all humankind, but also a concrete path towards a more just, inclusive, and lasting peace."

Echoing repeated concerns by the late Pope Francis and Caccia, the Holy See's statement said, "The Holy See remains concerned about the ever-growing military expenditure, which diverts significant resources from investments in development sectors such as healthcare, education and infrastructure."

Globally, defense spending reached $2.72 trillion in 2024, up 9.4% from 2023 and "the steepest rise since at least the end of the Cold War," according to data from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

That investment is set to expand still further, with NATO members (with the exception of Spain) agreeing June 25 to raise defense spending to 5% of their respective gross domestic product (GDP), a move significantly driven by Russia's aggression in Ukraine and concern over threats to European security.

"In this context, the Holy See renews its proposal for the establishment of a global fund, partly financed by redirecting resources currently allocated to armaments," said Formica, reading the statement. "This fund could make a meaningful contribution to eradicating poverty and hunger, and to promoting development in the world’s most disadvantaged regions. This would advance a more just and sustainable path towards peace, and protect and promote human dignity."

The Holy See's statement emphasized that "lasting peace requires a commitment to integral human development, upholding the God-given dignity of every person and promoting the conditions necessary for justice, solidarity and the flourishing of all."