

The bilateral relationship

By HE MR FRANCIS CAMPBELL

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FRANCIS CAMPBELL is British Ambassador to the Holy See. Born on 20th April 1970 he has a BA in Political Science and Scholastic Philosophy from Queen's University, Belfast and MA's in European Integration from the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium and in International Relations from the University of Pennsylvania, USA. He joined the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1997 and was Policy Advisor and then Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, becoming First Secretary (External Affairs) at the British Embassy to Italy in 2003. He was Senior Policy Director of Amnesty International prior to his current role.

As the United Kingdom's Ambassador to the Holy See it has been my privilege since 2005 to help develop and strengthen an important relationship for Her Majesty's Government, and one which in 2010 reaches a new milestone: the first official visit by the Pope to the United Kingdom. The UK's relationship with the Holy See touches on a wide range of global issues where we have many shared interests and objectives, and the Papal Visit will be an unprecedented opportunity both to celebrate what has been achieved so far in these areas, and to look ahead at how we might jointly address future challenges.

The Catholic Church plays a unique role on the world stage. It is active at both the global and local level, whether through delivering healthcare and education at the grassroots level, or lobbying world leaders on important global issues such as conflict resolution, disarmament and climate change. The Catholic Church's global presence gives it a unique position in the fight against poverty in the most vulnerable parts of the world.

The Holy See is the universal government of the Catholic Church and operates from the Vatican City State, a sovereign, independent territory of 0.17 square miles. The Holy See acts and speaks for the whole Catholic Church. Recognised in international law as a sovereign juridical entity, headed by the Pope, the Holy See maintains diplomatic relations with 178 states, and is recognised as a permanent observer state at the United Nations.

The Holy See is therefore a sovereign entity with an unusually large global reach. The Catholic Church is a global institution with over 1.15 billion adherents (17.5 per cent of the world's population, including some 10 per cent of the UK population); reach into every corner of the planet through its 500,000 priests, 800,000 sisters/nuns, 219,655 parishes; serious influence in as many countries as are in the Commonwealth; a privileged status as interlocutor with the two other Abrahamic faiths – Islam and Judaism – and two generations of experience in inter-faith dialogue and many centuries of co-existence. The Holy See is one of the world's oldest organisations, with a continuous history from the period of Emperor Constantine in the fourth century AD.

The United Kingdom and the Holy See

The Crown's first resident ambassador, John Shirwood,

was sent by King Edward IV to the Pope in 1479, hence the Embassy to the Holy See is the UK's oldest. Formal diplomatic relations between the Crown and the Holy See were interrupted in 1536. Links were restored in 1553, but ceased again in 1559 until they were restored formally in 1914. However, unofficial ties between the UK and the Holy See were maintained through much of the 18th and 19th centuries. The United Kingdom re-established resident diplomatic relations with the Holy See in 1914. These were raised to full Ambassadorial status in 1982, coinciding with the pastoral visit of Pope John Paul II to the United Kingdom in that year.

Since his election in 2005, Pope Benedict XVI has frequently spoken out on international themes and issues, such as the need to protect the environment and tackle climate change, address the plight of the poor in developing countries, and find ways to resolve conflicts around the world. So the Holy See is often at the cutting edge of policy-making on many global issues, and it is here that the United Kingdom's relationship with the Holy See has its principal focus.

International Development

The Holy See is a crucial partner to the international community if we are to deliver on the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. In view of this, Pope Benedict has written regularly to world leaders ahead of G8 and G20 Summits, reminding governments not to forget the plight of the poor in the developing world. Overall, aid increases and debt cancellation have helped to get 40 million more children into school. The number of people with access to AIDS treatment has increased from just 100,000 to over four million. The proportion of the world's population living in poverty has fallen from a third to a quarter.

The Holy See's contribution is key to that continuing success. The Catholic Church alone is reckoned to be the world's second largest international development body after the UN. Caritas Internationalis, the social arm of the Catholic Church, is a Vatican body which brings together some 160 national Catholic aid agencies under a single umbrella (including CAFOD in England & Wales, and SCIAF in Scotland). More than 50 per cent of the hospitals in Africa are operated under the auspices of faith-based organisations, with the Catholic Church in Africa being responsible for

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nearly one-quarter of all healthcare provision. The Catholic Church is one of the biggest global health providers. It runs 5,246 hospitals, 17,530 dispensaries, 577 leprosy clinics, and 15,208 houses for the elderly, chronically ill and people with physical and learning disabilities worldwide. Its agencies provide a quarter of all HIV/AIDS care in Africa. In education too, the Catholic Church provides around 12 million school places in Sub-Saharan Africa, thereby offering educational opportunities to enable millions of young people to get out of poverty.

The United Kingdom warmly welcomes the work of Catholic organisations in many of the poorest countries of the world, including in the Commonwealth, and our Embassies maintain a dialogue with local Catholic organisations aimed at finding ways to bring about positive outcomes. An example of UK's close collaboration with the Holy See in recent years has been on developing new ways to finance international development. The International Finance Facility (IFF) uses financial markets to front-load development spending. Launched at the Vatican in 2004, Pope John Paul II gave the concept his full moral support. In November 2006, Pope Benedict XVI went a step further and purchased the first Immunisation Bond (IFFIm). This Bond has raised over US\$1.6 billion for immunisation programmes in 70 of the world's poorest countries. These funds will prevent five million child deaths by 2015, as well as more than five million future adult deaths, by protecting more than 500 million children against measles, tetanus, and yellow fever. The United Kingdom's joint work with the Holy See on the Immunisation Bond, and the Pope's participation from the very outset, helped spread the global message about the Bond and make it a success. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom Government has renewed its own pledge to commit 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income to international development by 2013.

Environment

The Holy See has been at the forefront of international efforts to protect the environment and tackle climate change. Pope Benedict's 2009 Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* focused strongly on environmental issues, calling on the international community to counter mistreatment of the environment, to work to ensure that the costs of exploiting resources are borne by those who incur them, not by future generations; and stressing that the protection of the environment and the climate requires full international co-operation, including with the weakest regions of the world.

The Holy See has also led on practical steps. The Vatican City State is on track to becoming the world's first carbon neutral state, offsetting its emissions through the planting of trees and installing solar

panels. It also recently announced plans to build Europe's largest solar farm on 740 hectares to the north of Rome, which will produce enough energy to power over 40,000 homes and exceed the EU's renewable energy targets of 20 per cent of demand by 2020. The United Kingdom is working with the Holy See to raise awareness of the consequences of climate change around the world, for example through our South America Climate Change Network. And this year the UK Government has given its full support to the 10:10 campaign aimed at reducing carbon emissions by 10 per cent in 2010.

But as important as those practical steps are, the real influence of the Holy See rests in its moral weight. While some will be persuaded to address climate change by self-interest as a result of the economic or scientific evidence, the Holy See is well-placed to articulate the moral argument that will shift the momentum toward political and social action.

Disarmament

On the disarmament agenda, the United Kingdom and the Holy See have a number of shared objectives. The Holy See played an important role in achieving the international consensus required to agree a Convention on Cluster Munitions in 2008. It was among the first states to sign the new treaty, and this leadership helped build the momentum which led to the Convention coming into effect on August 1 this year. Similarly, in 2009 the Holy See played an important role in encouraging 153 states to support a UN General Assembly Resolution on moving ahead with an Arms Trade Treaty. That crucial vote brought us a step closer to what Pope Benedict called for in 2008 when he exhorted "all persons involved in the sale or traffic of arms, with interests that are often extremely lucrative, to ask themselves what are the consequences engendered by their behaviour. [...] May the international community commit itself in this field together with the local authorities so that peace in all countries will gain ground every day." With over 2.1 million people having died from armed violence in the last three years, the Holy See has been a strong supporter of the Arms Trade Treaty since the outset.

It is clear that the Holy See is in a unique position to help the international community to meet a range of global challenges, such as eradicating poverty, encouraging disarmament, and combating climate change. On these and other issues the United Kingdom and the Holy See share a common vision, hence the relationship that has built up between us is an important and productive one. As we welcome Pope Benedict on his momentous visit to the United Kingdom, we also look forward to developing our understanding and co-operation still further in the period ahead. **F**