



*To The Right Honourable David Cameron, MP
Prime Minister*

I am pleased to reply to your kind letter of 5 June 2013, with which you were good enough to inform me of your Government's agenda for the British G8 Presidency during the year 2013 and of the forthcoming Summit, due to take place at Lough Erne on 17 and 18 June 2013, entitled *A G8 meeting that goes back to first principles*.

If this topic is to attain its broadest and deepest resonance, it is necessary to ensure that all political and economic activity, whether national or international, makes reference to man. Indeed, such activity must, on the one hand, enable the maximum expression of freedom and creativity, both individual and collective, while on the other hand it must promote and guarantee their responsible exercise in solidarity, with particular attention to the poorest.

The priorities that the British Presidency has set out for the Lough Erne Summit are concerned above all with the free international market, taxation, and transparency on the part of governments and economic actors. Yet the fundamental reference to man is by no means lacking, specifically in the proposal for concerted action by the Group to eliminate definitively the scourge of hunger and to ensure food security. Similarly, a further sign of



attention to the human person is the inclusion as one of the central themes on the agenda of the protection of women and children from sexual violence in conflict situations, even though it must be remembered that the indispensable context for the development of all the afore-mentioned political actions is that of international peace. Sadly, concern over serious international crises is a recurring theme in the deliberations of the G8, and this year it cannot fail to address the situation in the Middle East, especially in Syria. In this regard, I earnestly hope that the Summit will help to obtain an immediate and lasting cease-fire and to bring all parties in the conflict to the negotiating table. Peace demands a far-sighted renunciation of certain claims, in order to build together a more equitable and just peace. Moreover, peace is an essential pre-requisite for the protection of women, children and other innocent victims, and for making a start towards conquering hunger, especially among the victims of war.

The actions included on the agenda of the British G8 Presidency, which point towards law as the golden thread of development – as well as the consequent commitments to deal with tax avoidance and to ensure transparency and responsibility on the part of governments – are measures that indicate the deep ethical roots of these problems, since, as my predecessor Benedict XVI made clear, the present global crisis shows that ethics is not something external to the economy, but is an integral and unavoidable element of economic thought and action.

The long-term measures that are designed to ensure an adequate legal framework for all economic actions, as well as the associated urgent measures to resolve the global economic crisis, must be guided by the ethics of truth. This includes, first and foremost, respect for the truth of man, who is not simply an additional economic factor, or a disposable good, but is equipped with a nature and a dignity that cannot be reduced to simple economic calculus. Therefore concern for the fundamental material and spiritual welfare of every human person is the starting-point for every political and economic solution and the ultimate measure of its effectiveness and its ethical validity.

Moreover, the goal of economics and politics is to serve humanity, beginning with the poorest and most vulnerable wherever they may be, even in their mothers' wombs. Every economic and political theory or action must set about providing each inhabitant of the planet with the minimum wherewithal to live in dignity and freedom, with the possibility of supporting a family, educating children, praising God and developing one's own human potential. This is the main thing; in the absence of such a vision, all economic activity is meaningless.

In this sense, the various grave economic and political challenges facing today's world require a courageous change of attitude that will restore to the end (the human person) and to the means (economics and politics) their proper place. Money and other political and economic means must serve, not rule,

bearing in mind that, in a seemingly paradoxical way, free and disinterested solidarity is the key to the smooth functioning of the global economy.

I wished to share these thoughts with you, Prime Minister, with a view to highlighting what is implicit in all political choices, but can sometimes be forgotten: the primary importance of putting humanity, every single man and woman, at the centre of all political and economic activity, both nationally and internationally, because man is the truest and deepest resource for politics and economics, as well as their ultimate end.

Dear Prime Minister, trusting that these thoughts have made a helpful spiritual contribution to your deliberations, I express my sincere hope for a fruitful outcome to your work and I invoke abundant blessings upon the Lough Erne Summit and upon all the participants, as well as upon the activities of the British G8 Presidency during the year 2013, and I take this opportunity to reiterate my good wishes and to express my sentiments of esteem.

From the Vatican, 15 June 2013

Francis

