

UNIAPAC 2016 - International Conference: “*Business Leaders as agents of economic and social inclusion*” – 18th November 2016, New Synod Hall, Vatican City

The first session of the morning was focused on “*Inclusive economy and progress. Business leaders generating decent work for an integral human development*” offering a specific panel about practical improving of human dignity in the companies activities. As a foreword, **Michael Naughton**, Professor at the University of Saint Thomas (USA), pointed out why subsidiarity is a crucial plus in the contemporary market explaining the foundation of the concept in the Catholic Social Teaching of the last century (starting from Pius XI Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931) and moving on to John Paul II social magisterium and Benedict XVI *Caritas in veritate* recalling and recognizing the ‘gift-attitude’ as a basic economical, and not only spiritual, positive value. On this level, what must be changed in many companies is not a single strategy but the whole way of thinking, learning to see its workers as ‘co-workers’ and proactive agents in the companies’ choices and decisions. When a worker is cut out from the company decisions, in fact, the risk is that “*he may feel disengaged*” and not involved anymore in his working environment: that’s why the practice, and not only theory, of the subsidiarity principle is so vital to the contemporary mission of any company. Coming to the best-practice cases, Naughton presented the impressive ‘Coaniquem’ case, from Chile. This is a corporation founded about twenty-five years ago following serious injuries of babies and minors in general at home with the aim of recycling bottles of glass throughout the Country in order to finance youth healthcare and recovery cure for home injuries. Starting off with a simple but ‘socially-strong’ idea and little money, in just a few decades the development was simply striking registering the national record of glass ever recycled and taking care at the same time of many indigent families and children. Here it must be pointed out the fruitful and mutually enriching cooperation between for-profit and not for-profit corporations that was basic in order to launch the whole project.

According to **Nick O’Donohoe**, Vice Chairman at the Global Steering Group on Social Impact Investment in United Kingdom, business leaders are also challenged to move from a short-term thinking approach to a long-one, leaving the old habits and communicating at the best their shares socially invested in Institutions, Agencies, Charities and NGOs. **Katherine Milligan**, Director at the *Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship*, agreed on that calling for a breakthrough in the wrong widespread mindset about core-business activities and operations: now

more than ever companies “*must go beyond Corporate Social Responsibility*” standard approaches and taking into proper account that financial outcomes in a globalised world often go beyond immediate material earnings (including for example the creation of larger ways of accesses to customers, higher trust and confidence from Governments and Public Authorities etc.) so that social agenda and social needs become part of the basic strategic-plan of the corporation.

Another key-issue in the global crisis is that of the new youth generations that felt themselves totally abandoned – and often discarded – from the ‘business world’, as **Jean-Marc Liduena**, Consulting Executive Committee at *Deloitte*, outlined in the following conversation recalling the high figures about youth unemployment in Europe and also the unexpected rise of “*irreligious people*” (according to one of the last surveys on the thoughts and feelings among people aged between 18 and 35 in Europe nearly 30% of the interviewed people described themselves as ‘not-believer’) and even a significant number of youth that think that religious faith may be dangerous for peace and social dialogue because they may create feelings of hate and fear in their members. In order to solve these challenges, Liduena answered suggesting to dedicate more attention on four different moral and social aspects: 1) Purpose (“*a company has to have a purpose that youth people can appreciate more than just making profits [...] covering stakeholders values*” , 2) Passion (“*to put in evidence the social value of a working environment creating passion for the work you’re providing*”, 3) Partnership (“*cooperation and networking convey [almost naturally] a sort of commercial spot for your activity*” and, last but not least, 4) People (“*Showing care for people*”).

A critical virtue for a real leader is practical wisdom too, or in other words the ability to think at the same time on theory and practice on a plural, highly demanding and multitasking scenario, commented by **Gabriele Pandolfini**, CEO at BNL Group, one of the major banking groups in Italy. Just comparing 2016 bank market needs and priorities with 2008, one immediately realizes how quick and impressive the cultural changes have been. Customers are now at the center of the market so that they themselves choose which kind of bank they can trust to, and not viceversa. Digital and social media revolution, furthermore, suggests that customers satisfaction and judgement (positive or negative) can be conveyed to any other customer in the world at any time influencing in this way image and appreciation of the bank worldwide. Finally, one must not forget that the workers usually produce more and at the best if they “*feel part of a project for the achievement of the common good*” because every person needs to know that he, or she, is working for something useful for other people and not for anonymous agents, like robots, computers or machines. Taking these considerations in mind, Pandolfini explained that microcredit system (providing money to very small entrepreneurs that in a normal situation would not have any chance

from any bank and supporting their personal project with the requested know-how and technical skills, with a total of 4000 projects launched at the moment) and ethics oriented financing-policies (e.g.: BNL does not provide money to coal industries or mine establishment that do not respect human rights) are strategic endeavours to attract and loyal new customers and to the advantage of bank's appreciation in general. The final message of this social renewed social-attitude appears in the end quite clear and appealing for the customers: *“human person, and not virtual products, are our core-business”*.

In the following session (*“Inclusion of excluded. Concrete steps and actions towards an inclusive economy: best practices”*) seven different testimonials presented to the audience their successful business experience aimed to overcome social exclusion and directed to support integral human development as well. **Randy Lewis**, *Walgreens* former senior Vice-President and father of an autistic boy named Austin, explained how his company (dedicated to hire and provide work to people with disabilities) became a major company in the US market, not despite disabled people, but precisely thanks to disabled people hiring. Their first idea was, also in this case, quite simple: *“We wanted to demonstrate that our kids can work in an ordinary place of work without creating a specific job or an entire company apart from the market-job”*. Hard to believe, the ‘impossible’ challenge has been won just in few years showing not only a better and virtuous environment of work (*“we discovered that disabled people stay much more loyal to their professional commitment [...] you don't have absenteeism with them”*) but also a deep and remarkable impact on culture (*“people around them started to think at the company's system as a community looking at the other as a person to get to know better, appreciate and to respect”*). However, as briefly argued by **Martin Burt**, executive director from *Fundaciòn Paraguaya* (Paraguay), every human person lives in a certain social and familiar context and if we want to tackle the major poverty challenges today we have to learn to think finally in terms of family groups more than on an individual - and individualistic - way. In his best-practice case it's in fact families that make their own ‘poverty dashboard’ (or ‘development plan’, speaking from their point of view) answering to fifty specific questions about their basic needs in food, education and healthcare. The central idea is that creating abstract and often complicated indexes on facts and figures does not help anybody materially in the world while teaching the poor how to communicate and consequently to respond they themselves to their needs is a more fruitful and intelligent strategy (*“The poor are the real experts to consult”*). Another stimulating experience was offered by **Chiara Condi**, President of *Led by Her*, a French association – based in Paris – dedicated to help women that suffered from violence and rape, a crime which affects about 10% of the female population in Europe. The association works on two level: on one side, they call the Public and Civil Institution (e.g.: the French Ministry of Health) to

be informed and aware and to take into proper account this dramatic question in contemporary society and, on the other hand, *Led by Her* offers direct business and entrepreneurial courses to the women it takes care trying to help, step by step, their progressive human and professional recovery in the society.

Paraplegic people's social exclusion was discussed in the following speech by **Amina Laraki**, founder and president of the Moroccan group *AMH*, that presented some figures about this particularly vulnerable group of people (60 millions in the world nowadays, about 2% of the global population) and explained the different steps of the recovery-path for the paraplegic people together with the implementation of local cooperation of her association with national civil authorities and civil society in Morocco. A strong Christian Entrepreneurship is at service also in Brasil where it has been founded APAC, Association for the Protection and Assistance of the Convicted, now directed by **Valdeci Antonio Ferreira**, a former convicted himself, that started up a new kind of penitentiary where convicted people have the chance to begin a new life, praying, studying (having the chance to achieve a university degree) and learning practical skills in order to enter into the labour market as soon as they come back to the ordinary life. Finally, inclusion of the excluded is supported even in Thailandia thanks to the Haco Group initiatives directed by **Sompong Dowpiset**, an entrepreneur that actively promote Catholic social teaching makes his business in the ceramic sector selling kitchens and bathrooms in the more disadvantaged areas of the Country and improving at the same time workers families' environment. In any case, what is common in all these best-practice cases is the personal involvement and engagement by the different excluded people that have been felt accepted, loved, motivated and get a chance to start again a new life and to learn practically what personal and social responsibility is about.

The afternoon session (titled "*The need of forthright and honest debate*") was introduced by Msgr. Robert Vitillo and focused on the different threats to the human dignity throughout the world today, starting with the dramatic problem of the modern slavery that involves more than forty millions of people, as pointed out by **Andrew Forrest**, president of the Australian Minderoo Foundation. Despite all rights charters and international codes and laws, exploitation of human beings (in the job market such as in the sexual commerce) is in fact still alive in too many parts of the world and Christian believers cannot simply remain silent as if they were living on another planet. In the last year all the major religious leaders of the world gathered therefore in Rome, with Pope Francis, in order to call on Governments and Institutions to eradicate human slavery signing an historical interreligious document aimed at contrast a global-scale crime, something never happened before. Other seeds of hope were offered by **Raymond Sfeir**, Lebanese representative of Christian entrepreneurs, commenting on the interreligious dialogue going on in his Country, daily

threatened by the war but so much loved by Saint John Paul II when the Pope said that modern history of Lebanon was a good example of a peaceful cohabitation with Islam and a strong message in itself (“*Lebanon is a message*” for everybody in the world, with his own words). The success of the cohabitation in the small area is to be searched in the several joint interreligious social initiatives (such as Christian and Muslim Entrepreneurs meetings, institutions and common projects) and, spiritually speaking, in the same kind of popular veneration towards Our Blessed Virgin Mary, respected and loved even by the Muslims of the region going yearly in pilgrimage to the Christian churches and sanctuaries dedicated to Our Lady. After all, nothing is really impossible if you believe in God, according to the Holy Scripture (see Luke 1,37), and this is true for the business activities too, as one could see in the moving testimony delivered by **Mariano Castañeira Valente**, from Hot Pepper Leadership Institute, on the life of the Servant of God Enrique Shaw (1921-1962), a charismatic Argentinian businessman and a faithful husband too, married and father of nine children, that lived in Buenos Aires trying to put together his passion for working and developing business society (he used to define unemployment as “*a moral evil*” to beat) with professional helping to other people (including spiritual growth of his personnel) and serving daily the Church pastoral mission of evangelization in civil society. Throughout his life he was President of the local association of catholic men, member of the Christian Family Movement, founder of the Christian Association of Business Executives (ACDE), and co-founder of the Catholic University. He also created the House of the Catholic Book and was later imprisoned for his participation in the Catholic Action and public defending and speaking in favour of the Church. In the fifties, furthermore, he strongly contributed to the creation of the Compensation Fund for Child and Family Support, a remarkable act supporting materially workers families with many children in need that came finally into national law in 1957. Man of deep faith and strong hope rooted on Eucharistic prayer and a deep marian devotion, always smiling and helping others, Enrique Shaw was at his time a real testimonial to the goodness of the Divine Mercy and, today, still a concrete source of personal inspiration for many entrepreneurs and businessmen of his Country, in Latin America and abroad.

Concluding the event, José Maria Simone expressed satisfaction and a deep thank to all the participants coming from 44 Countries among the five continents underlying once more the specific added value of UNIAPAC vision and mission: that of teaching business effective approach “*showing the cases*” and stimulating successful experiences and best-practices around the world looking at real business not like an abstract or complicated theory but as something real, influencing several aspects and dimensions of social and public ordinary life of families and people. Simone also added that “*in a few months we will launch a special initiative*” aimed to train and to educate

people that are outside business market at the moment, as driver and a concrete commitment to effective social and economic inclusion. Finally, Cardinal Peter Turkson, speaking in the name of the Holy See, coming from Africa, also called the participants to act in support of the most suffering and disadvantaged people, particularly suggesting to take into consideration a State in his native region, South Sudan (founded in 2013), the youngest Christian Country of the world, affected by a long, terrible civil war and sadly classified by the economic and marketing experts as a “*failed State*”, showing in this way a sign of tangible mercy and high Christian commitment at the end of the Divine Mercy year for the Extraordinary Jubilee.