



UNIAPAC's XXVII World Congress

20-22 October 2022, ROME

Courage to change

Creating a new economy for the common good

Introduction

UNIAPAC¹ has had an extraordinary path that went over most of the principles and values of the Social Doctrine of the Church which ended, with the magnificent idea of the Holy Father on the Noble Vocation of the Business Leader that is the best definition of the role of the entrepreneur. Now it is the time to prepare us for the noble aim of this Noble Vocation which we all are aware that is the human person. We need a change of the economy which puts the life in the center.

To do this enormous change we do have to reshape our way of working together within our companies, the relations between leaders and employees, the dignified salary, the participation of all in the decisions that affect their lives, the relation with the natural environment, the responsibility towards future generations and finally the great objective of any human being in his or her life which is a path towards happiness and development: "Courage to Change". It is this courage to change that will allow us to truly make the moves that are needed to come to the new way of facing the economic challenges and it is only by changing truly the way of leading our companies that we will be able to achieve that new economy.

Strongly inspired by the CST; UNIAPAC identifies with Pope Francis' message about the role of the entrepreneur in society: *"Business activity is essentially 'a noble vocation, directed to producing wealth and improving our world'. [101] God encourages us to develop the talents he gave us, and he has made our universe one of immense potential. In God's plan, each individual is called to promote his or her own development, [102] and this includes finding the best economic and technological means of multiplying goods and increasing wealth. Business abilities, which are a gift from God, should always be clearly directed to the development of others and to eliminating poverty, especially through the creation of diversified work opportunities"*.²

Pope Francis also recall us that a creative way of thinking was needed if we are to emerge from the crisis -pandemic and conflicts- in a resilient and united way. *"An entrepreneur without creativity is not a good entrepreneur. Because he will not know how to value things well and can make disasters. Grow in creativity, don't be afraid. Today we need that. We have all suffered a crisis with COVID. You can't get out of a crisis alone: either we all get out or nobody gets out. And you don't come out of a crisis in the same way: either we come out better or we come out worse. For this the entrepreneurs have work to do"*.³

UNIAPAC aspires to be recognized worldwide by its distinct promotion of business as a noble vocation. A vocation that is noble means that we are blessed with something extraordinary, but it

¹ UNIAPAC is an international network of Christian entrepreneurs founded in 1931 in Belgium. Supported by its 45 000 members in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe, UNIAPAC is structured in a network of national associations and its goal is to promote amongst business leaders the vision and implementation of an economy serving the human person and the Common Good.

² *Fratelli tutti*, 123.

³ A Message of Pope Francis addressed to UNIAPAC. 5.11.2021.

also means that we have an enormous responsibility to ensure that our noble vocation will produce noble results. Business fulfills its noble vocation when it is committed to serving the common good and to satisfying human needs with quality. It is the final reason of management to benefit people to develop themselves in a way to achieve happiness and freedom. The purpose of any enterprise is to address real human needs and to create wealth, but it only achieves its final objective when three interdependent activities are considered by businesses: “Good goods”; addressing genuine human need through the creation, development and production of goods and services, “Good work”, organizing good and productive work, and “Good wealth”; using resources to create and to share wealth and prosperity in sustainable ways. This wealth is distributed in a way that all involved receive enough to have a dignified life, and of being autonomous, of having freedom to choose, freedom to follow one’s life project and make decisions.

The concepts analyzed by the XXVII World Congress of UNIAPAC provide that emphasis of UNIAPAC’s call for a personal and collective transformation of entrepreneurs, governments and representatives of civil society in the construction of a more prosperous, fair and inclusive economy considering the critical role that businesses had in preparing a better future.

1. Panel #1: Sustainable economy, employment and decent work

“The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek a sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change.”⁴

We have to conceive a sustainable economy as an investment in the future. We need a humanism capable of bringing together ethics with the social, economic, technological and ecological dimensions, contributing to peace and sustainable development. We have to look for a balance between embracing technological innovation, growth and wealth creation while at the same time viewing progress within the greater horizon of the common good, human dignity and respect for our common home. Enterprises, as main creators of jobs and growth, have a central role to play in the transition to a sustainable future. Sustainable creation of wealth and just distribution of that wealth among the various stakeholders who directly and indirectly participated in its creation aims to contribute to a society more prosperous, solidary, equitable and fair. The responsibility of the business leader which is critical in the creation and distribution of wealth, in the rational use of natural, financial and technological resources; in the production of goods and services and to offer decent work for the greatest number of people including decent salaries and the provision of social protection measures. The business sector is a key player in the rebuilding of the social contract after the pandemic.

This panel attempts to debate the transformation of work, its challenges and opportunities to reflect on the changing context of labor. It aims to examine the potential impact of transformative forces at work today that could affect the enterprise, entrepreneurship and work of tomorrow, enhancing or compromising the contribution of enterprises to the future of decent work and the common good, in light of *Laudato si’*, the document *The Vocation of the Business Leader*⁵, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, especially Goal #8: “*Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*”.

⁴ *Laudato si’*, 13.

⁵ “*The Vocation of the Business Leader: A Reflection*”, UNIAPAC and Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, November 2018.



Decent work

Work represents a fundamental dimension of human existence, as participation not only in the act of creation, but also in that of redemption. Through work, Man develops his skills, applies his intelligence and will. Work is therefore the place par excellence where Man should express and enjoy his dignity. Work is a condition of the common good. A common good understood as the conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members' relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment. Human work allows most of the society to obtain the necessary resources to lead a decent life and meet their basic needs, as it is also a service for society in the search for the common good. UNIAPAC fully accepts the challenges that 'Laudato si' proposes to the business world, in particular to aim at full employment in condition of dignity.

UNIAPAC considers the dignity of the person who works a paramount value and we recognize the universal dimension of human work, based on its relational character, being the human person the origin and purpose of work. The driving capacity of a society, and its orientation towards the common good is measured based on the job prospects it can offer, and the business sector has a significant role to contribute to do it.

Dignified Salary

The objective of any person is to achieve happiness and the existence of enterprises should be to become a tool to help people to find their way to reach it. This means that we have to understand that/ the reason for a company to produce wealth is to distribute it among the people involved in its creation. It is very important to start to speak about a dignified salary as a condition of decent work. A dignified salary means to ensure everyone a salary that allows him to pay for his needs, to pay for his children's education but even more to allow him to invest on his personal development that will insure his own growth towards happiness. Of course, this is only possible when linked with the promotion of productivity and by distributing the benefits of this growth of productivity, to the people involved in its creation.

Social Protection

The provision of a dignified salary is very important, but it could be also accompanied of social protection measures. UNIAPAC encourages all social partners (governments, private sector, workers and civil society) to create and maintain high levels of social protection in a way which is financially sustainable now and for future generations. Through common efforts social partners should ensure that welfare benefits accompany people in labor market transitions.

Social Dialogue

Social dialogue contributes to create a labour market which is productive, flexible and protective. The relations within the enterprise have to change in order to promote the creation of a team spirit as opposed to the confrontation of managers, entrepreneurs and workers. It is very important to get people involved in the projects in which they work. Christian Business leaders have the responsibility, in cooperation with Governments and civil society, including trade unions, to find common responses to the Global Crisis with a transformative perspective in the promotion of integral ecology and integral human development and to make business activity a noble vocation and build a more just, prosperous and responsible society.

2. Panel #2: Ethical and sustainable Finance for the Common Good

The combination of globalization with its expansion of markets and earnings and new communications and computing technologies has brought the financial sector to great prominence in business. The revenue and profits of the financial sector have become an increasingly large segment of the world-wide economy. Its institutions, instruments and motives are having a significant influence on the operations and understanding of business. The financial sector has given millions of people easier access to credit for consumption and production and has also produced social or ethical funds allowing investors to apply their values in supporting or avoiding certain industries or certain companies.

But despite these positive developments, financialisation can overwhelm the real economy. Indeed, it has contributed to a whole assortment of negative trends and consequences. Ethical investment should be the norm: “*Efforts are needed—and it is essential to say this—not only to create ‘ethical’ sectors or segments of the economy or the world of finance, but to ensure that the whole economy—the whole of finance—is ethical, not merely by virtue of an external label, but by its respect for requirements intrinsic to its very nature*”.⁶ It is therefore gratifying to witness a rise in discussions of sustainability—environmental and social as well as commercial—in the business world.

In a very dynamic economic-financial system, with an extremely rapid pace of change brought by innovation, creativity and instant communications, adequate regulations will tend to lag no matter how quickly they adapt to new circumstances or how rapidly abuses or surpasses become known. Self-regulations based on a principled business performance are of paramount importance in these cases and the ethical conduct of the business leader becomes critical to ensure an unconditional respect of the human dignity. In an increasingly uncertain world, entrepreneurs and investors alike need a beacon to make investment decisions. It is of course a question of studying the risk and the profitability of the opportunity, but today we must go further, by also evaluating the social and environmental impact of this decision. It is an ethical imperative, informed by the social teaching of the Church.

The ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) perspective on investing has often challenged the traditional capital market view that a company’s sole responsibility is to its shareholders by also seeking to address broader purposes and objectives beyond financial returns. A vision of social impact investment is very important to be analyzed, including the provision of blended finance for development projects in poor countries and societies.

This panel aims at reflecting, exchanging ideas, and sharing of best practices in the field of ESG-guided perspective on investing and experiences in social impact investment to discuss on dilemmas in the field of finance to have a better understanding of choices and decisions aiming at the common good.⁷ The vocation of the human family, inspired in the Christian Social Teaching, entails working for the common good. The financial and economic business leaders – do play a significant role as catalysts of a new social behavior; the way they interact with the existing or new structures becomes critical in shaping actions to the search for the common good.

⁶ *Caritas in veritate*, 45.

⁷ See the contribution elaborated by the Secretariat of COMECE: “*A financial System serving the Common Good in times of Systemic Change*”. Brussels, November 2021.

3. Panel #3: Challenges and opportunities of Technological transition and Digital economy⁸

We are living not only an epoch of change but a change of epoch. Digital and technological innovations are creating a huge range of new opportunities. Technology offers instruments to build a better world, but it needs ethical parameters. Not everything that is technically possible is ethically acceptable. Therefore, a basic principle is: “*With great technology comes great responsibility*”. Scientific and technological progress is never an end in itself. It needs to be considered in the light of ethical considerations.⁹

Science and technology have allowed the world to make unprecedented achievements, which are among the greatest of human civilization. These achievements must be defended and appreciated. Nevertheless, they must still be subjected to critical analysis to correct existing imperfections, and to become aware of any risks or to uncover any misuse of its institutions or capabilities of those achievements. It is imperative, therefore, to establish an ethical framework of reference to guide the design, production and use of these technological constructs.

In general terms, the framework of ethical directives should be based on the principles of beneficence (technological constructs should benefit humankind), non-maleficence (the doctrine of first do no harm — technological constructs should not harm people), autonomy (the capacity to make independent and informed decisions on how to interact with a technological construct), and justice (technological constructs should be affordable and their benefits should be fairly distributed). This ethical framework should also be based on respect for basic values as human dignity, equality, justice and equity, non-discrimination, informed consent, private and family life, and data security; as well as on other principles such as non-stigmatization, openness, and individual and social responsibility. We therefore have to define structures and levels of digital responsibility both in the individual life and in society.

The impact of the new industrial revolution (digitalization, artificial intelligence and data flows, cybersecurity, supercomputers, etc.) over many jobs that are currently performed by humans but that will be done by technological constructs, in the near future, is not only predictable but a current reality. The idea of humans being replaced by the latest technological innovation is real; therefore, it should be addressed with urgency and from different angles. On one hand, technological advances cannot be stopped, nor should we try to artificially protect jobs “by decree”. To pursue this misconception would only lead to the loss of competitiveness as well as losing jobs. Moreover, technological innovations also create jobs that force people to use their more human faculties: creativity, intelligence, judgement, leadership, team effort and ethics. On the other hand, work automation could free people from monotonous and routine tasks, allowing them to devote themselves to more meaningful ones. In other cases, it could lead to benefits at an organizational level, such as boosting work safety using robots for dangerous and hazardous tasks currently performed by human beings. The key, then, is not to replace but to adapt the workforce to the new types of work.

Therefore, the greatest challenge is to ensure the employability of those who work. This requires

⁸ Rolando Medeiros, *New technologies and the noble vocation of the business leader*, 2019.

⁹ Maier Martin, *Ethics and Sustainability*, EUTEC, Brussels, 2020.



significant efforts in terms of education and training to improve the redistribution of the types of skills that will be needed in the future. It also involves major reforms in the labour market to make it more flexible to allow it to reassign workers to other types of employment. These challenges do not absolve businesses from responsibility. Business has a lot to contribute to the better and greater employability of workers. This is a responsibility business cannot avoid, if it is committed to create and maintain “good work”.

Business can do much more than just contributing to training, preparing and reassigning its workers so that they are able to face the challenges posed by new technologies. The challenge of being “employable” goes beyond constant training and continuous learning of professional skills and competencies. First and foremost, business is a community of people and, as such, a school that teaches a series of human virtues that will become increasingly necessary in the world of labour: solidarity, industriousness, respect, excellence, honesty, justice, etc. Business should make room for the integral human development of those who work in it. At the same time, this development is a great contribution to workers making them better equipped to face the challenges of the new industrial revolution, so that they can take them on with better and greater employability.

This panel aims at reflecting on Technology serving the common good. Personal change, political reforms and technological innovations must come together. Any technological development has to be accompanied by a development in human responsibility, values and conscience. Pope Francis invites to broaden our perspective. We have the freedom needed to put business and technology at the service of another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral.

4. Panel #4: Testimonies: From a Personal Transformation to change companies. Several business leaders from all the corners of the world will present their testimonies about their personal journey allowing them to see themselves challenged by a greater meaning in their business lives.

Format: Each discussion panel will be composed of 3 high-level speakers who are experts in the field and a moderator. The discussion sessions will have 40 minutes of discussion and 20 minutes of exchange with the public.

The challenge of UNIAPAC is to continue contributing our societies and our business leaders to turn business into a noble vocation. UNIAPAC has made significant contributions to foster the integral development of the person in our responsibilities as business leaders and putting the principles and values of the Christian Social Teaching at work in business decisions and actions.