

Aid tied to family planning is ‘an abuse of power,’ says papal nuncio

VATICAN CITY – The Vatican’s chief representative to the United Nations said giving foreign development aid only if a country adopts family planning programs that promote artificial birth control is “an abuse of power.”

Speaking at the United Nations in New York Sept. 29, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, papal nuncio to the world body, said true development entails respecting human life.

However, in some parts of the world, “development aid seems to be tied rather to the recipient countries’ willingness to adopt programs which discourage demographic growth of certain populations by methods and practices disrespectful of human dignity and rights,” he said.

He said it is “both cynical and unfortunate” that the developed world frequently tries to export a mentality of artificial birth control to developing countries “as if it were a form of cultural progress or advancement.”

“To predicate the decision to give development aid on the acceptance of such policies constitutes an abuse of power,” Archbishop Migliore said.

In general, it “has been proven to be a naïve or cynical and fatal delusion” for leaders to think political, economic and social policies can be forged and managed without any ethical framework aimed at protecting the rights and dignity of all people, he said.

Meanwhile, the Vatican’s representative to U.N. agencies in Geneva addressed the needs of the millions of refugees and displaced peoples around the world.

Archbishop Silvano Tomasi said Sept. 29 during a meeting in Geneva of the executive committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that people who have been forced to migrate “urgently need access to opportunities affording integral human development.”

The forcibly displaced “possess valuable potential, in terms of skills, capacities and knowledge, that could be transformed into economic and other developmental benefits for their families (and) host communities, as well as for their countries and areas of origin,” he said.

Presently, opportunities to increase refugees’ skills are seriously lacking, said Archbishop Tomasi.

If host countries and donors invest in more educational and vocational development programs for forcibly displaced people, then they will be helping alleviate some of the problems and the “negative conditions that caused these and other populations to move in the first place,” he said.