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PROPHETIC ECONOMY INNOVATIVE ECONOMY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

The recent international “Prophetic Economy” event succeeded in bringing together diverse protagonists of change in the world, with different approaches to a common goal of improving the status quo. Through a dynamic exchange of good practices – including outstanding contributions from the younger participants – a collaborative network has emerged of “prophetic actions” already happening in the here-and-now.

“Not just ‘green shoots’ but an entire forest growing up silently but surely” – a summary by one of the 500 “Prophetic Economy” participants from 40 countries and all five continents who gathered from 2 to 4 November at the International Mariapolis Centre, CastelGandolfo, near Rome, Italy. The event facilitated interactive and intergenerational exchange through a program of inspiring contributions, work groups and creative workshops.

What began as an international platform of encounter, exchange and encouragement, the event went far beyond the limits of mere networking, to become a driving force of energy and commitment for initiatives and actions at local, regional and international levels.

Internationally-renowned economist **Jeffrey Sachs**, a key speaker at the event, affirmed, “Prophetic economy means an economy that operates in the vision of the prophets and that means in the vision of justice, a vision of peace, a vision of meeting the needs of the poorest people, a vision of protecting creation. We need an economy of sustainable development which means an economy in which prosperity is shared, that is socially fair and environmentally sustainable”.

Diversity characterized the participants: economists, ecological activists, experts from the financial sector, students, entrepreneurs, people from a variety of different cultural and religious backgrounds, with a wide age range – the youngest being only 9 years old! The younger attendees were protagonists both in age-specific sessions involving interaction with experts in the fields of economy and ecology, and in cross-generational panels, contributing their own distinctive questions, proposals and life experiences.

How good it has been to have the children and young people with us” said **Josiane Gauthier**, Secretary General of Catholic Development Alliance CIDSE. “And what's extraordinary is that they were not pretending to be part of every conversation or imitating adults in any way and they were not just decoration either, not simply here to make the event more beautiful, which they did of course. They were part of life. Real life. And inspiring us with their profound intelligence and grace and truth”.

The event highlighted examples of good economic practices. As Italian economist **Stefano Zamagni** explained, “It’s those who look ahead and dare to gaze beyond the obstacles to find a way through, who are prophetic. The current economic and social models no longer work. The Prophetic Economy offers liberation from the old ways of thinking by daring to try out new pathways”.

“These kind of economic practices already exist”, observed **Lorna Gold**, economist with Trocair, the Irish development agency, “but all too often they’re invisible in the media and our culture. We have to make them visible if they're going to grow and become stronger. An event like this, bringing all these different groups together, is an important step to get to know each other, to understand the different work that we're doing and to brainstorm about how we can do more. Because the motto of this convention is ‘alone we can do so much, but together we can do much more’.”

The “Prophetic Economy Award” was launched to promote good practice through examples of the prophetic economy in action. **Carlo Petrini**, founder of the Slow Food Movement, acknowledged the award winners. “They practice a form of economic reality different from the norm, they see beyond



the pervasive economic modes. They are not so much prophetic in vision, as in their daily practice.”
(Link to Prophetic Economy Award winners)

“This is not about utopias or ‘small islands’ within an unjust and unchanging system. Here, we’re looking at signals of tangible change,” observed Argentinian economist **Cristina Calvo**. “In the face of massive global financial mechanisms, we run the risk of being discouraged and feeling powerless. The antidote to being static is to widen the spectrum of action on all three levels: micro, medium and macro. The prophetic economy shows us contemporary practical experiences and theoretical tendencies that are already able to indicate a different direction to take”.

A significant element within this event was the space given to those living in situations of poverty or social exclusion to make their own voice heard.

“The time has come to rethink our economy and rethink our world, not ‘for’ the poor, not even with their participation, but starting from them,” concluded **Jean Tonglet** of ATD Fourth World. “Our knowledge is incomplete until it includes the knowledge of those we want to liberate from poverty, who struggle with its effects on a daily basis.”

The challenge launched by this event is to invent new ways of collaboration, in order to be stronger and more creative in efforts to change to lifestyles based on a more sharing, more just and more sustainable economy.

“The new idea at the basis of this event,” explained Italian economist **Luigino Bruni**, “was to bring ecology and economy together. In today’s world, we cannot speak of poverty without mentioning climate. The cry of the land and the cries of the poor are actually the same cry. Through ‘prophecy’, the invisible are given their voice. One of the great messages of Pope Francis’ pontificate is the invitation to activate processes, not occupy spaces, because time is superior to space. Here, we can say that a process has been started. Prophecy may certainly be critical, but never pessimistic”.

The younger participants spent time considering and embracing the challenge launched by the World Food Organization to work to eradicate hunger in the world by 2030 (#zerohunger), formulating their own proposals:

- to promote the idea of a “deferred meal”, asking restaurants and bars to encourage their clients to buy an extra meal for someone in need, and issuing a #zerohunger sticker to participating businesses;
- to campaign for a new subject in the school curriculum teaching the Sustainable Development Goals promoted by the United Nations.

Prophetic Economy is an international project jointly run by seven organisations: Pope John XXIII Community Association, Nomadelfia, The Global Catholic Climate Movement, ATD Fourth World, Associazione Mondo di Comunità e Famiglia (World of Community and Family Association), SlotMob initiative and the international Focolare Movement represented by its Economy of Communion project and ‘Teens for Unity’ youth section.

www.propheticeconomy.org