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BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

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**Intervention by the Secretary for Relations with States at ministerial level meeting on the Central African Republic during the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

The following is the intervention pronounced yesterday in New York by H.E. Msgr. Paul Richard Gallagher, secretary for Relations with States, head of the Holy See Delegation, at the ministerial level meeting on the Central African Republic, which took place as part of the 73rd Session of the United Nations General Assembly:

**Intervention by H.E. Paul Richard Gallagher**

Mr. Chairperson,

The ongoing political and humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic remains of great concern to the Holy See, especially as this situation, as with numerous others happening in the world, reveals to a large degree the inability of the international community to muster the political will to address effectively the conflict with such devastating consequences.

Rather than witnessing clear strides of progress and improvement, the situation since the High-level Ministerial held last year has seen a dramatic increase in violence. The regions in the north-west and center of the country remain in tense conflict and the area in the south-west part have unfortunately seen an increase in fighting.

The consequences of years of ongoing tensions are wreaking havoc on the lives of millions of civilians, leaving thousands of victims and hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons and refugees fleeing to the neighboring countries of Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo. As usual, women and children are often the first victims in situations of conflict. Nearly half of the population in the Central African Republic, roughly 2.5 million persons, are in need of basic humanitarian support, of this number about 1.3 million are children.

The role of MINUSCA [UN's Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic] to

“regroup and canton combatants and confiscate and destroy, as appropriate the weapons and ammunitions of elements and personnel who refuse or fail to lay down their arms”[1] with the aim of alleviating the suffering of defenseless civilians and in restoring order and peace to the country must be of highest priority for the international community. To this end, the Holy See encourages MINUSCA to exert greater efforts to guarantee the human rights of all citizens, protecting them from armed aggression and other abuses that violate their human dignity, without any discrimination of social status or religious affiliation. In this context, the Holy See remains concerned about the issue of illegal trafficking of weapons. Therefore, solid measures must to be taken to overcome this serious matter.

The international community bears the serious responsibility of giving the necessary backing that will facilitate the stabilization of the national Government and its bodies in such a way as to overcome institutional corruption, to ensure the rule of law and to make available the essential social services, including basic health assistance and education, without discrimination. A large part of the responsibility of the international community includes providing the necessary financial assistance, particularly in the area of humanitarian assistance, which is gravely lacking in the present moment. It is extremely worrying that humanitarian workers and aid agencies have themselves become targets, forcing them, in some cases, to reduce their activity or indeed to withdraw completely with devastating effects for those most in need of their support for survival.

The Catholic Church and its organizations in the field have been and will continue to engage untiringly in the humanitarian efforts so badly needed in the Central African Republic. At the same time, a real and sustainable political solution must be urgently pursued in favor of a long-lasting peace. The Holy See cannot appeal strongly enough that peace will never be achieved through violence. Honest dialogue, based on good faith and open to forgiveness and reconciliation, is the only way to arrive at the necessary stability on the social, economic and political levels.

The religious dimension of the necessary dialogue cannot go unmentioned. All citizens must strive for mutual understanding and tolerance of the other, regardless of their political affiliation, ethnicity or religious confession. In his visit to the Central African Republic, Pope Francis was clear in his appeal that Christians and Muslims, indeed, all believers, must “remain united in working for an end to every act which, from whatever side, disfigures the Face of God and whose ultimate aim is to defend particular interests by any and all means, to the detriment of the common good. Together, we must say no to hatred, no to revenge and no to violence, particularly that violence which is perpetrated in the name of a religion or of God himself.”[2]

Such inclusive dialogue requires the committed engagement of all people of any religious profession. The Catholic Church will continue to pursue every avenue that overcomes strife, division and contention, for the sake of enjoying stability, peace and unity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

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[1] UN Security Council, Resolution 2149 (2014) Art. 30g.

[2] Pope Francis, Address at the Central Mosque of Koudoukou, Bangui, 30 November 2015.

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