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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA "CONSULTATION ON HUMANITARIAN ISSUES: SITUATION OF DISPLACEMENT: ISSUES AND EXPERIENCE" DEL PROGRAMMA ALIMENTARE MONDIALE

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Ieri 16 marzo, si è svolto presso la sede del Programma Alimentare Mondiale (PAM), a Roma, un incontro dal titolo: "Consultation on Humanitarian Issues: Situation of Displacement: Issues and Experience".

Riportiamo qui di seguito l'intervento pronunciato in tale occasione dall'Ecc.mo Mons. Agostino Marchetto, Nunzio Apostolico, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso la Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite per l'Alimentazione e l'Agricoltura:

Madam Executive Director,

Mr. Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. The Holy See recognizes the considerable efforts made by the International Community and its Organizations and Bodies to identify topics and circumstances that distinguish the situation and the needs of refugees and internally displaced persons. Therefore, my Delegation is pleased to comment on some aspects regarding the strategies and priorities expressed in the documents submitted at this forum, according the special perspective of the Holy See that has the advantage of the experience of the Catholic Church, as well as the collaboration and reflection also of other Christian Churches and communities.

2. A second point of satisfaction is the fact that the documentation for this meeting is well done. It draws attention to an often hidden phenomenon that can be even more dramatic than that of refugees and for which there is even less international protection.

3. Third, the link of food aid with protection and security of staff and beneficiaries in dialogue to secure the cooperation of national and local authorities is well made by the papers. In this perspective we recognize with satisfaction the value and importance of a strategic role of non-governmental organizations dedicated not only to the basic assistance of displaced persons and in the struggle to alleviate their condition but also to eliminating the causes of displacement. Their activities show how many people are convinced of the duty of solidarity, the new name of peace (cf. Enc. Let. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 39).

Recent interventions of the International Community in different areas of crisis, as well as the particular experience of WFP, underline that aid in itself does not resolve the underlying problems and must not be seen as a substitute for political action or disarming aggressors and neutralizing perpetrators of human rights offences.

The link is also crucial since delivering aid in security requires many actors working together in a coordinated way. From our point of view, some more effective indication of who is the lead agency needs to be given, especially to avoid "overcrowding the humanitarian space".

4. Fourth, among the actors in the human field of our attention today, we do not want to forget Church's organizations and workers, who in addition to aid collection and distribution are involved in other activities that are an integral part of protecting human dignity and promoting a holistic outlook of his development. They involve a presence, even when aid organizations leave, of Churches' organizations for community-building, education, advocacy for rights, and activities that promote physical, psychological and spiritual well-being. We would also encourage considering the use of this network for food delivery when security arrangements do not permit a WFP or other Agencies to visibly enter a particular situation.

In most of the forty countries with significant population of internally displaced people, the Catholic Church is present with its charitable and pastoral assistance. Exact statistics are not so easy to obtain, but there is presence, availability, and sharing of resources with the needy. As one example, allow me to mention Colombia, where the Episcopal Commission for Human Mobility, through the local Caritas, has undertaken more than seventy small and medium sized projects for internally displaced persons from 1997-1999, involving food aid, health, housing, economic rehabilitation, and transport. It has reached more than 66,500 individuals and 650 families.

Regarding cultural institutions that offer protection, I would like to recall the suggestion made during the annual Executive Committee meeting of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees last October, namely the need to promote and renew the respect traditionally accorded in so many societies to churches, other buildings for religious gatherings or worship, and school as traditional places of sanctuary and protection. One such example, well known in Sri Lanka, is the Madhu Shrine's Open Relief Centre that welcomes displaced people, without regard to ethnic or religious considerations.

In this context may I take the liberty of recalling what the World Food Summit's Plan of Action in the Commitment Two, Objective 2.4, affirms concerning the engagement of States, international Organizations and civil society in order to guarantee the relation between education, development, health care and nutrition. I quote: «To promote access for all, especially the poor and members of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, to basic education and primary health care provision in order to strengthen their capacity for self-reliance».

5. Fifth, the Holy See Delegation firmly supports special attention for displaced women and the crucial role they play in situations that have a serious impact on their dignity and fundamental rights. It is necessary, as the working papers point out, that they be given priority, especially as they ensure the welfare of their families. In conflict situation many refugee women do not receive basic humanitarian assistance, and we cannot ignore the drama of violence against women, physical, sexual, psychological or moral. We are conscious that any type of violence infringes their most elementary rights as stated in the international human rights instruments, as well as the rules of international humanitarian law applied in conflict situations. Moreover today the legal order of International Community, taking into account the «national law relating to pregnancy», (*Statute of International Criminal Court*, art. 7.2.f), establishes the following acts as crimes against humanity: «Rape, sexual slavery,

enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, or any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity» (*Ibid.* art. 7.I.g). Furthermore Holy See's position on strategies and humanitarian action in refugees and displacement situations cannot ignore a further type of violence through «the imposition from outside of various programmes which particularly concerns the obligatory control of number of births, forced sterilization and the encouragement of abortion» (*National Report of the Holy See in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women*, n. 47).

The special attention to displaced women fits well into another theme in the working paper, namely the inclusion of displaced people in the planning and execution of their programs for nutrition and protection. This assures that they are not just objects of international compassion but also subjects of duties and rights, including that of deciding their present and future. The literature of the UNHCR, for example, points out the difference in the quality of life in exile when displaced women, with their sensitivity for children and family, are involved in the distribution of food rations and other assistance.

6. Sixth, my Delegation has also appreciated the public exposure this gathering gives to the *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*. Knowledge of their content and the willingness to put them in action would undoubtedly save the lives and dignity of millions of people. We wish to encourage continual dialogue on how the *Guiding Principles* can be strengthened, developed to become one of our basic points of humanitarian reference (such as the Geneva Conventions) for governments and humanitarian agencies alike. Organizing study sessions on the *Principles* for governmental, humanitarian, police, and security personnel in countries of displacement would surely enhance the dignity and security of the displaced.

7. Seventh, the documents speak about the issue of IDPs and National sovereignty in terms of sovereignty involving responsibility. I believe this is a point that we need to stress very much. Sovereignty does not mean that leadership can do whatever it wants. In this sense Pope John Paul II, opening the International Conference on Nutrition in 1992, said:

"Bien souvent, des situations où la paix est absente, où la justice est bafouée, où le milieu naturel est détruit, mettent des populations entières en grand danger de ne pouvoir satisfaire leurs besoins alimentaires premiers. Il ne faut pas que les guerres entre nations et les conflits internes condamnent des civile sans défense à mourir de faim pour des motifs égoïstes où partisans. Dans ces cas, on doit de toute façon assurer les aides alimentaires et sanitaires, et lever tous les obstacles, y compris ceux qui proviennent des recours arbitraires au principe de non-ingérence dans les affaires intérieures d'un pays. La conscience de l'humanité, désormais soutenue par les disposition du droit international humanitaire, demande que soit rendue obligatoire l'ingérence humanitaire dans les situations qui compromettent gravement la survie de peuples et de groupes ethniques entiers: c'est là un devoir pour les nations et la communauté internationale".

Leadership of a sovereign Nation involves first of all the obligation to protect the dignity and fundamental rights of the citizens and of all who dwell on national territory in accord with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

8. In conclusion I would like to support the idea of awareness-raising, mentioned in the working papers. There is public support and response in many Nations, not only the wealthier ones, for alleviating hunger, particularly in emergency situations. The interaction between small contributors and the WFP can also be an educative moment when donors are invited to look into the causes of internal displacement and ask what can be done about this human tragedy, particularly when it is preventable.

Thank you for your attention.

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