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INTERVENTO DELL'OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE PRESSO L'UFFICIO DELLE NAZIONI UNITE A GINEVRA ALLA 58a SESSIONE DELLA COMMISSIONE DEI DIRITTI UMANI

INTERVENTO DELL'OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE PRESSO L'UFFICIO DELLE
NAZIONI UNITE A GINEVRA ALLA 58a SESSIONE DELLA COMMISSIONE DEI DIRITTI UMANI

In occasione del dibattito sulla discriminazione razziale alla 58a Sessione della Commissione dei Diritti umani delle Nazioni Unite, che si svolge a Ginevra dal 18 marzo al 26 aprile, S.E. Mons. Diarmuid Martin, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede, ha pronunciato il 22 marzo 2002 l'intervento che pubblichiamo qui di seguito:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. DIARMUID MARTIN

Mr Chairman,

The events of the past year have brought our attention back to the need for a new vision of how to shape, in our contemporary world, the coexistence of persons, peoples and nations, with their different backgrounds and history.

The "moral bankruptcy of racial prejudice and ethnic animosity", to use the words of Pope John Paul II¹, can only be definitively eliminated through a conscious effort of solidarity and a recognition of the essential unity of the one human family. Terrorism is an affront to human dignity and must be fought vigorously. A fight against terrorism, however, is by definition a fight in favour of the rule of law, in favour of relationships between persons and nations that are based on respect for the dignity of every human person and their fundamental human rights.

This is the context within which we celebrated the Year of Dialogue between Civilizations. It is the spirit that inspired a series of important events aimed at fostering dialogue among religions and strengthening the role of religions at the service of peace. Religious leaders gathered in Assisi, on 24th January, proclaimed a "Decalogue for Peace"², stressing that "violence and terrorism are incompatible with the authentic spirit of religion". They proposed a frank and patient dialogue, which recognizes that "to encounter the diversity of others can become an opportunity for greater reciprocal understanding".

The Durban World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance set out to design a common roadmap for reading the contemporary situation of racism and for indicating the road towards a future of more fruitful interaction and coexistence. The road to Durban was not an easy one and the map that has resulted may not be the complete path for the future that we would have desired.

But, together with the General Assembly resolutions, the results of the Durban Conference offer us sufficient material to move forward, in broad consensus, in the fight against racism. There is an evident awareness in so many parts of the world that we must foster a new spirit of dialogue and coexistence. Unless racism is addressed rapidly and at its roots, then its consequences dramatically eat away at the fabric of human cooperation.

Regarding the follow up to the Durban Conference, the Holy See would like to draw attention to some specific themes which it retains particularly important and topical.

Each country should set in place appropriate national structures to address the questions of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Where structures already exist, their effectiveness should be verified and appropriate improvements made. Special attention should be given to situations where, despite best efforts, racist sentiments may still prevent the vulnerable from fully exercising their human rights. We must monitor the ability of the police and of the administration of justice to address racist abuse effectively and sensitively. Conscious efforts should be made to ensure that vulnerable groups have full access to basic education, so that they can better realize their complete God-given potential and fully participate in society.

National programmes should be quick to monitor the emergence of new forms of racism. The scientific community should be especially vigilant to ensure that progress in medicine and biotechnology is used for the benefit of the entire human family and never to the disadvantage of the vulnerable or with latent racist intent. "The temptation of eugenics is still latent, especially if powerful commercial interests dominate it"³.

Migrants constitute a particularly vulnerable group. "The increased mobility of peoples demands more than ever an openness to others"⁴ It is paradoxical that migrants and their families should today be exposed to racial intolerance, even in situations in which it is recognized that they bring an irreplaceable contribution to the economic progress of the countries to which they have moved. A globalized community must develop a positive image of migration. Attempts to utilize anxieties and alarm in the face of migrants as a calculated tool for short-term political advancement should not be accepted.

In transmitting the Assisi Decalogue for Peace to Heads of State and Government, Pope John Paul stressed that today "humanity must choose between love and hatred". Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance belong to those forms of hatred that can be called "ancient and modern". Racist tendencies have so often in history returned to raise their ugly heads. Each generation must say its no to racism and construct its yes "to seek truth, justice, freedom and love, so that every human person may enjoy his inalienable rights, and every people, peace"⁵.

¹Homily in Johannesburg, 17 September 1995.²Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano* (English-language edition), 6th March 2002³*The Church and Racism*, Contribution of the Holy See to the Durban Conference, Vatican City 2001, n.214*The Church and Racism*, Contribution of the Holy See to the Durban Conference, Vatican City 2001, n.225Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano* (English-language edition), 6th March 2002[00467-02.01] [Original text: English]
