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INTERVENTO DEL CAPO DELEGAZIONE DELLA SANTA SEDE ALL'INCONTRO DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELL'ONU SULL'INFORMAZIONE E LE TECNOLOGIE DI COMUNICAZIONE PER LO SVILUPPO

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che il Capo Delegazione della Santa Sede, S.E. Mons. John Patrick Foley, ha pronunciato ieri a New York nel corso dell'incontro dell'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite sull'Informazione e le Tecnologie di comunicazione per lo Sviluppo:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. JOHN P. FOLEY

Mr. President,

The Holy See is very pleased that the General Assembly of the United Nations is devoting a meeting to the consideration of Information and Communication Technologies for Development. As you might expect, the Holy See is most interested in the human and moral implications of such development.

Reflecting upon the communications media, His Holiness Pope John Paul II has noted that the "most essential" question raised by technological progress is whether, as a result of such technology, each person can become "truly better, that is to say more mature spiritually, more aware of the dignity of his (or her) humanity, more responsible, more open to others, especially the neediest and the weakest, and more ready to give and to aid all" (*Redemptor Hominis*).

In our commendable concern to make information and communication technology available to the broadest range of persons possible, I would hope that we might remember three basic moral foundations of communication: the overriding importance of truth, the dignity of the human person and the promotion of the common good. These principles formed the basis of Studies on ethics in advertising, in communications and in Internet published over the past five years by the Pontifical Council on Social Communications, copies of which I am happy to leave with the Secretariat.

The Holy See in the name of the Vatican City State was privileged to take part in the World Telecommunications Development Conference in Istanbul in March and to make a number of the following observations.

Bridging the digital divide requires that measures be taken to end the unjust discrimination dividing the rich from the poor, both within and among nations, on the basis of access to the new information and communications technologies (ICTs). Another divide operates to the disadvantage of women, and it, too, needs to be closed.

The extension of basic telecommunications services to the entire population of developing countries is a matter of justice. Long an aspiration, it is still far from the reality in too many instances, and this threatens to render futile any discussion of the introduction of the new ICTs. Nevertheless, the principle of universal service in telephony should be extended to provide for access to basic on-line services at reasonable tariffs.

The ICTs propel and sustain the process of globalization, leading to a situation where commerce and communication are freed from the restraints of national frontiers. This can create wealth and promote development, but there has been an unequal distribution of the benefits. While some countries - as well as corporations and individuals - have greatly increased their wealth, others have been unable to keep up or have even become poorer. Worse, there is a perception in some countries that globalization has been imposed upon them and that it is a process in which they are unable to participate in an effective way.

While globalization has both positive and negative effects, we can only agree with those critics who have pointed out that, as regards the new ICTs, the result has been a widening of the digital divide between the developing and developed countries. It follows that individuals, groups and nations must have access to the ICTs in order to share the promised benefits of globalization and development and not fall further behind.

The transfer of technology is not merely a matter of making equipment available, but of spreading the necessary formation and information. The role of knowledge is fundamental in the development of telecommunications.

This Delegation agrees that priority should be given to increasing the knowledge base of the inhabitants of the LDCs, and that the need for an investment in education goes hand-in-hand with the need for investing in the telecommunications infrastructure.

The Holy See believes that development must be understood not solely in economic terms, but in a way that is fully human, concretely enhancing every individual's dignity and creativity. Education for development should not merely fill heads with information, but ought to release the creativity of the human person.

Without unduly caricaturing attitudes, it can be said that developing countries wish to acquire the technological capacity for independent development while the industrialized countries aspire to the role of technological leadership and seek to expand markets. Thus, on the one hand, there are those who consider that technology should be freely shared for the common good, while others see technology as private property. In the international arena, it need no longer be a question of opposing camps: the opportunities for generous compromise and fruitful cooperation are available.

His Holiness Pope John Paul II, in an address to the UN Secretary General and to the Administrative Committee on Coordination of the United Nations (April 7, 2000) spoke of a "growing sense of international solidarity" that offers the United Nations system "a unique opportunity to contribute to the globalization of solidarity by serving as a meeting place for states and civil society and a convergence of the varied interests and needs... Cooperation between international agencies and non-governmental organizations will help to ensure that the interests of states - legitimate though they may be - and of different groups within them, will not be invoked or defended at the expense of the interests and rights of other peoples, especially the less fortunate".

Thank you, Mr. President.