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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA PRIMA SESSIONE DEL COMITATO PREPARATORIO PER IL "VERTICE MONDIALE SULLA SOCIETÀ DELL'INFORMAZIONE"

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Dall'1 al 5 luglio si riunisce a Ginevra la Prima Sessione del Comitato Preparatorio per il "Vertice Mondiale sulla Società dell'Informazione".

Pubblichiamo di seguito il testo dell'intervento di S.E. Mons. Diarmuid Martin, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite e delle Istituzioni Specializzate a Ginevra, Capo della Delegazione della Santa Sede:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. DIARMUID MARTIN

In the social and economic realities of our contemporary world, access to knowledge is a key to an accelerated path to development. The World Summit on the Information Society is called to consolidate a vital column of the global development architecture.

Communications technology has enabled the globalization process to proceed with rapidity. We must now ensure that it also enables the globalization process to proceed with equity. Communications technology must be managed to play a central role in ensuring that globalization leads to genuine integration and inclusion.

Pope John Paul II has noted that many people, perhaps the majority today, "have no possibility of acquiring the basic knowledge that would enable them to express their creativity and develop their potential. They have no way of entering the network of knowledge and intercommunication that would enable them to see their qualities appreciated and utilized. Thus, if not actually exploited, they are to a great extent marginalized. Economic development takes place over their heads" (Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, n.33).

The World Summit must be a results-oriented process: a process that sets out achievable goals for ensuring sustainable access to knowledge for the poorer countries, and for ensuring that such knowledge is effectively managed in the interests of the common good.

In order to be results-oriented, the Summit must first of all attentively identify the factors that have so far

hindered inclusion and integration into the communications revolution. It must then identify a programme of concrete steps to reverse such exclusion. It must propose new partnerships of collaboration to ensure the financing of that programme. It must put mechanisms in place to guarantee the management and to verify the implementation of that programme.

If the benefits of communications technology are to be put at the creative disposal of all, especially in those areas that are particularly deprived, then the question of infrastructures will require special attention and investment. In presenting a global programme, the World Summit must be sensitive to ensure that specific needs of developing countries are not overlooked. This may require, for example, identifying technologies appropriate to the particular situation of developing countries or helping those countries leapfrog intermediate technologies.

A strong stress on infrastructure must also be accompanied by investment in human capacity, in releasing the creative capacity of people that has been blocked by lack of access. The World Summit must carefully align itself with established international development goals, especially concerning education. Communications technology can be crucial to accessing education and to improving its quality.

Free and open communication and access to knowledge are, of course, in themselves powerful instruments for enhancing integration and strengthening personal capacity. Open communication fosters freedom within the global society. It spreads knowledge that, in its turn, fosters creativity and choice. Honest and open communication is an essential pillar for the functioning of democracy. It is part of the ethical core of a true market economy.

The Summit should examine those factors that impede or distort honest and open communication. The distortion of communication – through subtle phenomena such as "spin" - by powerful economic actors, or even by government itself, undermines the trust of citizens in institutions. Appropriate transparent legal and anti-monopoly mechanisms are as important in the area of communications as in any other sector of the economy.

Above all, knowledge should be made available for the good of the entire human community. This principle applies in particular to knowledge that is required to address urgent human needs, especially concerning health. When we are speaking of knowledge that is necessary for the very survival of people, then the profit motive must be always tempered by concern for the common good.

The Summit must however be careful not to create new antagonisms between government, the private sector and civil society. It is more important to establish new partnerships: new partnerships of responsibility. Good governance is not a magic formula imposed from above. It must not be allowed to become an ideology. Good governance in the communications sector must also be a results-oriented process. It involves putting into place those structures that will facilitate participation and solidarity in the service of the common good, and in enabling all persons to fully realise themselves and their capacities.

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