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SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE AL TERZO COMITATO DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SUI RIFUGIATI

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento pronunciato ieri, 7 novembre, dinanzi al Terzo Comitato dell'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite, da S.E. Mons. Renato R. Martino, Capo Delegazione della Santa Sede, sul tema 104: Rapporto dell'Alto Commissario delle Nazioni Unite per i Rifugiati:

● INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. RENATO R. MARTINO

Mr. Chairman,

Once again, the Holy See welcomes the *Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* and adds its voice to those who commend the office of the High Commissioner for its fine work in promoting and protecting the rights and well being of the some of the world's most vulnerable persons.

My Delegation is pleased to note that, in the words of the High Commissioner, "Slight reduction from 21.1 million in 2000 to 19.8 million at the end of 2001", of persons of concern to the High Commissioner. With all that the people of the world have witnessed in the past twelve months, any decrease in the number of persons separated from home and family is a welcome sign of the unbreakable spirit which binds all people into one family.

At the same time, my Delegation is distressed that the Report states that some people found borders that were closed to many or suffered violence, xenophobia and the denial of fundamental rights. Once again, the Holy See realizes that the world has gone through many changes in the past year. At the same time, however, it is those very changes and the situations that have risen that should focus on the reasons for the existence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees.

In December 2000, the United Nations celebrated the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. As it has done for more than these fifty years, since before the formal establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner, the Holy See continues to lend its support and take its place, within the world community to provide care and protection to those who have been forced from their

homes, no matter what the reason.

The Holy See assures that currently, the Catholic Church, through a variety of agencies, most particularly the *Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People*, *The Pontifical Council Cor Unum*, *Caritas Internationalis* and its national offices, *Catholic Relief Services*, and the *Jesuit Refugee Service*, operates centers throughout the world, serving the needs of many thousands of people.

During 2001, Church agencies in the United States alone aided 319,541 refugees and immigrants, who received help with settlement, family reunification, education, legal and employment services, and language classes.

All these agencies and institutions continue to 'put a human face' on the refugee and migrant, not dealing with quotas or numbers but reaching out to help people in need.

A discussion on the protection of refugees cannot be complete without also adding a word of support for all those governments and states that continue to struggle to meet the needs of incoming refugees and migrants.

Satisfying the basic needs of life can not be seen as a burden but as a necessity even as those same governments find it difficult to provide for their own citizens. The family of nations should commend and continue to aid in those efforts.

Finally, Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation realizes that the Report of the Secretary General deals with only those "persons of concern to the High Commissioner". However, I wish to add a few words about the other group of people who need special attention.

According to the statistics compiled by the United Nations, there are as many as fifty million internally displaced persons throughout the world.

Just as it continues to support the efforts of countries receiving refugees and migrants, the Holy See calls upon governments to recognize their responsibilities toward providing security and access to basic social services to all those displaced persons within their borders.

The recently concluded World Summit on Sustainable Development has taught a valuable lesson. The result of that meeting was more than the very important Political Declaration and outcome document. People came together and discussed problems and ways to find solutions. My Delegation hopes that the same spirit of changing words into actions will continue to help all people who have been separated from their homes or their land or their families to find a place to live that recognizes their human dignity and their right to security, peace and happiness.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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