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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALL'INCONTRO DEL CONSIGLIO DI SICUREZZA DELL'O.N.U. SULLA SITUAZIONE TRA IRAQ E KUWAIT

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, ha pronunciato ieri, nel corso dell'incontro del Consiglio di Sicurezza dell'O.N.U. sulla situazione tra l'Iraq e il Kuwait:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Mr. President,

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to express the Holy See's deep concern and solicitude on the Iraqi issue, also in this Chamber of the Security Council, where the issues related to international peace and security are debated to prevent the world from the scourge of war. I am pleased to recall on this occasion, Mr. President, the successful meeting of Secretary-General Kofi Annan with His Holiness Pope John Paul II yesterday evening at the Vatican.

Mr. President,

Since the very beginning, the Holy See has always recognized the international community's irreplaceable role in solving the issue of Iraq's compliance with the provisions of U.N. resolutions.

In this regard, the Holy See realizes that the international community is rightly worried and is addressing a just and urgent cause: the disarmament of arsenals of mass destruction, a threat surfacing not just in a single region, but unfortunately in other parts of our world. The Holy See is convinced that in the efforts to draw strength from the wealth of peaceful tools provided by the international law, to resort to force would not be a just one. To the grave consequences for a civilian population that has already been tested long enough, are added the dark prospects of tensions and conflicts between peoples and cultures and the deprecated reintroduction of war as a way to resolve untenable situations.

The Holy See is closely following the developments on the ground and expresses its support for the efforts of the international community towards resolving the crisis within the sphere of the international legality. For this purpose and with this in mind, His Holiness Pope John Paul II has recently sent a Special Envoy to Baghdad, who met with President Saddam Hussein and delivered him a Message from the Pope stressing, inter alia, the need for concrete commitments in faithful adherence to the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. A similar message has also been conveyed to Mr. Tarek Aziz, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, who visited the Pope on 14 February last. Moreover, in view of the devastating aftermath of a possible military intervention, the Special Envoy of the Pope made an appeal to the conscience of all those who have a role to play in determining the future of the crisis in these coming decisive days "because, in the end, it is conscience that will have the last word, stronger than all strategies, all ideologies and also all religions".

Mr. President,

The Holy See is convinced that even though the process of inspections appears somewhat slow, it still remains an effective path that could lead to the building of a consensus which, if widely shared by Nations, would make it almost impossible for any Government to act otherwise, without risking international isolation. The Holy See is therefore of the view that it is also the proper path that would lead to an agreed and honorable resolution to the problem, which, in turn, could provide the basis for a real and lasting peace.

"War is never just another means that one can choose to employ for settling differences between nations. As the Charter of the United Nations Organization and international law itself remind us, war cannot be decided upon, even when it is a matter of ensuring the common good, except as the very last option and in accordance with very strict conditions, without ignoring the consequences for the civilian population both during and after the military operations" (Address of Pope John Paul II to the Diplomatic Corps, 13 January 2003).

On the issue of Iraq, the vast majority of the international community is calling for a diplomatic resolution of the dispute and for exploring all avenues for a peaceful settlement. That call should not be ignored. The Holy See encourages the parties concerned to keep the dialogue open that could bring about solutions in preventing a possible war and urges the international community to assume its responsibility in dealing with any failings by Iraq.

Mr. President, before concluding this statement, allow me to echo in this Chamber of peace the hope-inspiring words of John Paul II's Special Envoy to Iraq: **"Peace is still possible in Iraq and for Iraq. The smallest step over the next few days is worth a great leap toward peace"**.

I thank you, Mr. President.

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