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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA CONFERENZA MINISTERIALE DEL GRUPPO POMPIDOU DEL CONSIGLIO D'EUROPA (DUBLINO, IRLANDA, 16-17 OTTOBRE 2003)

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Nei giorni 16 e 17 ottobre 2003 si è tenuta a Dublino, nell'ambito delle attività del Consiglio d'Europa, una Conferenza Ministeriale del Gruppo Pompidou, per la lotta contro la droga in Europa.

Pubblichiamo qui di seguito il testo dell'intervento di S.E. Mons. Giuseppe Lazzarotto, Nunzio Apostolico in Irlanda, Capo della Delegazione della Santa Sede:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. GIUSEPPE LAZZAROTTO

Mr President,

The Holy See is pleased to participate in this Ministerial Conference sponsored by the Pompidou Group, for it sees this as a fitting and encouraging opportunity to discuss and analyze the strategies in the fight against the threat represented by drug abuse, as the Conference theme aptly suggests.

The data provided by the European Observatory for Drugs and Drug Addiction in the 2002 Annual Report on the Evolution of the Drug Phenomenon in the European Union and Norway continue to raise alarms and indicate that the situation, instead of improving, is growing worse.

Great concern is caused both by the constant increase in the use of synthetic drugs and by the ever decreasing age at which drug abuse is observed.

Pope John Paul II, already in 1984, noted that "among the threats facing young people and all of society today, drug abuse is one of the greatest, since it is a danger that is as insidious as it is invisible, and one that is not yet properly recognized according to the extent of its seriousness" (John Paul II, Address to young people in drug addiction therapy communities, 27 May 1984, in *Insegnamenti* VII/1, 1984, pp. 1538-1539, no.2).

If politics is at the service of the human person and society, it must not fail to go to the root of problems. This means grappling with the anxiety, that is, the existential crisis or apprehension, that in a consumeristic and materialistic society finds rich soil for shattering the inner equilibrium in subjects who are particularly weak, fragile and sensitive. There is no doubt that the phenomenon of drug abuse is connected with a crisis of civilization and with great dejection. One of the most important factors leading to drug abuse is the lack of clear motivation, the absence of values, the conviction that life is not worth living.

Among the political measures to be adopted in the fight against this phenomenon, my Delegation would point out in the first place those aimed at combatting illicit trafficking in drugs, controlled by powerful criminal organizations. This takes place in the larger context of arms trade, terrorism and trafficking in human beings. Such criminal activity goes beyond national borders and therefore requires a concerted policy of international cooperation.

Faced with the many suggestions and decisions made in different national contexts for the purpose of resolving the problem, the Holy See does not agree with the proposal to legalize the circulation and distribution of drugs, not even so-called light drugs. We must not fail to take into account the risk of moving from the use of light drugs to the use of those with more destructive effects. The State should not assist its more vulnerable citizens to alienate themselves from society and ruin their lives.

Rather, the Holy See encourages above all the promotion of preventive information and education, and the possibility of the proper treatment and reintegration into society of those who unfortunately fall prey to drug addiction.

More resources should be destined to the application of preventive and educational measures in the family, in schools, in sports clubs and in society in general. There is a need for placing renewed emphasis on the human values of love and life, the only values capable of giving meaning to human existence.

As far as treatment and reintegration into society are concerned, my Delegation places great importance on the work of assistance and recovery communities. This is a matter of helping drug addicts, in the midst of their inner suffering and their state of anxiety, to rediscover dignity, to take control of their lives once more and to reintegrate themselves into their families and into society.

An integrated system of services offered by local agencies, institutions and educational groups (family, school, community) should increase the ability to bring effective aid to the lives of young people who, once they are freed from drug addiction, will be able to avoid a relapse. Only the desire to be reborn and the ability to heal will ensure that "recovered" young people can return to a normal life after having passed through the frightening tunnel of drug addiction.

An adequate policy in this regard must also address the ethical questions involved, seeking to place the problem in a wider anthropological, ethical, social, political and economic context. Means and resources need to be set aside for this purpose.

Mr President, allow me to conclude by reaffirming the willingness of the Holy See and the Catholic Church—with their extensive networks of institutions and structures devoted to the education, assistance and rehabilitation of drug addicts—to work with European institutions in seeking together paths and means for a policy in the fight against drug abuse and addiction that will not only resist the criminal and subversive phenomenon but will also take into consideration the moral issue of drug addiction and of a society that promotes a culture of solidarity for life.

Thank you, Mr President.

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