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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 3a COMMISSIONE DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SUL PUNTO 105B: "ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE"

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 3a COMMISSIONE DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SUL PUNTO 105B: "*ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE*"

Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, il Nunzio Apostolico S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, ha pronunciato ieri davanti alla 3a Commissione dell'Assemblea Generale della Nazioni Unite sul punto 105b: "*Elimination of all forms of religious intolerance*":

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Mr Chairman,

Religious freedom in all its forms has hit the headlines time and again over the past months and weeks. Rightly so, for freedom of religion is a condition for the pursuit of goodness and true happiness; religious freedom, in particular, is man's pursuit of the "last things", those things that satisfy the deepest, inmost and unfettered longings of the human spirit. In this sense, therefore, religious beliefs and freedom must be lived out and considered as a positive value and not be manipulated or seen as a threat to peaceful coexistence and mutual tolerance; it is a value consistent with other freedoms and so it serves to bolster their existence too.

Religious leaders have a special responsibility in dispelling any misuse or misrepresentation of religious beliefs and freedom. They have in their hands a powerful and enduring resource in the fight against terrorism; and they are called to create and spread a sensitivity which is religious, cultural and social, and which will never turn to acts of terror but will reject and condemn such acts as a profanation of religion.

Similarly, public authorities, legislators, judges and administrators carry a grave and evident responsibility to favor peaceful coexistence between religious groups and to avail themselves of their collaboration in the construction of society, rather than restricting them or suffocating their identity, especially when it comes to religious groups' efforts in favor of the poorest in society. It might be paradoxical to say that in this age of globalization new forms of religious intolerance have also emerged. The greater exercise of individual freedoms

may result in greater intolerance and greater legal constraints on the public expressions of people's beliefs. The attitude of those who would like to confine religious expression to the merely private sphere, ignores and denies the nature of authentic religious convictions. More often than not, what is being challenged, in effect, is the right of religious communities to participate in public, democratic debate in the way that other social forces are allowed to do.

Moreover, in recent times it seems that, more and more often, the juridical and legislative approach to religious liberty has tended to empty it of its substance.

In the spirit of the Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religious Freedom and Belief, legal frameworks for religious freedom, as well as regulations and other significant governmental actions, should foster the contribution of believers to the common good of society and allow them to "maintain appropriate charitable or humanitarian institutions". Appropriate here also means allowing religious associations and groups to work in the social, educational and humanitarian field, and to be at the same time religiously distinct, to act in harmony with their respective mission, and without having to disregard any religious commitments or moral values in providing a social good. Attempts to secularize or to interfere in the internal affairs of religious institutions would undermine their *raison d'être* as well as the very fabric of society. On the other hand, accommodation of religious diversity when it comes to service in the public arena - except, of course, in specific instances where there is a direct threat to public health and safety - respects a specific facet of the right to religious freedom, enriches a genuine culture of pluralism and provides a much needed and sometimes indispensable service to the poor, the vulnerable and the needy.

The recognition of the primacy of the individual conscience, open to the truth, is basic to the dignity of the human person. The Holy See continues to draw strength from this conviction in defending vigorously freedom of conscience and religious liberty, at both the individual and societal level. Such a defense is still needed today, since episodes of violence cause tragic suffering, while religious sites are destroyed, religious personnel are being mistreated and even murdered, and faith communities are persecuted.

Thank you, Mr Chairman.

[01695-02.01] [Original text: English]

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