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SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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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 Quarta Commissione (Special Political and Decolonization Committee) dell'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite sul punto 75: *"UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East"*:

● **INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE**

Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation would like to begin by expressing its appreciation of the Report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and of the work of the

Agency itself over the last year.

For those of us who follow this question, the content of the Report will be all too familiar. We come to this forum once again to review the delivery of human services amid an unending cycle of violence and terrorism, military action and reaction, in effect a series of retaliations which begets more violence. At this point UNRWA and many other agencies including the Pontifical Mission for Palestine, through the generosity of the international community, are providing services to the refugees which in normal circumstances would be the responsibility of local authorities.

A realistic analysis of the situation finds that there is a lot of peacemaking rhetoric but very little political will shown in the resolution of differences. The reluctance of the international community to challenge the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to negotiate in good faith has contributed to the fact that the Road Map has not taken off. Without these much needed negotiations, there are no opportunities for reconciliation, forgiveness, compromise or collaboration, all prerequisites for a lasting peace in the region. Communication is essential for bringing together the parties at difference. There is no way in which a policy of continued separation will bring about peace. In such a negative milieu UNRWA and the other humanitarian agencies must continue to provide services to the refugees.

My Delegation, Mr. Chairman, is keenly aware of the difficulties experienced by UNRWA in delivering meaningful services to the refugee population so adversely affected by this "undeclared war". The Pontifical Mission for Palestine, in conjunction with its collaborator Catholic agencies throughout the USA and Europe, has been serving for 55 years the same suffering population of refugees by addressing the problems of unemployment, access to education and medical services.

With a view to restoring dignity to the unemployed in the area, it has initiated labor intensive programs to give them meaningful work. Through municipal projects they restore and rehabilitate infrastructure often damaged as a result of violence and armed conflict. Such programs also serve to strengthen local institutions.

Mr. Chairman, it is the hope of my Delegation that any solution found to resolve this multifaceted problem should include the question of the Holy City of Jerusalem. In light of the numerous incidents of violence and the challenge to free movement posed by the Wall, with checkpoints and curfews, the Holy See renews its call for "... internationally guaranteed provisions to ensure the freedom of religion and of conscience of its inhabitants, as well as permanent, free and unhindered access to the Holy Places by the faithful of all religions and nationalities" (A/RES/ES-10/2). Jerusalem, the Holy City, is the common patrimony of the believing world and whoever has custody of the Holy City is accountable for it to the international community. Its governance should not be considered solely a matter for one or other authority.

Current levels of violence have caused pilgrims to stay away from the Holy Land, imposing ever more severe economic penalties on all the people of the region, besides hindering the right of people from all over the world to visit and pray at the religious sites. My Delegation notes, in particular, that the local population does not always have free access to the shrines and holy places.

Mr. Chairman, the proposed Road Map has not yet brought peace to the region. When we consider the ongoing violence, the economic depression, restrictions on movement and lack of access to religious sites, it is hardly surprising that many feel obliged to leave the region definitively. It is painful to see that a land once entrusted with a message of love, life, brotherhood and peace, called by many a Holy Land, in these times sends a very different message to the world, one of division, destruction and death.

The family of nations must challenge all the actors concerned to renew their efforts to bring peace to the region. Only with a just and lasting peace — not imposed but secured through negotiation — will the legitimate aspirations of all the peoples of that land be fulfilled. Such an outcome depends greatly on the courageous readiness of those responsible to move to new attitudes of compromise which comply with the demands of justice.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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