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BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE AL COMITATO PERMANENTE DEL COMITATO ESECUTIVO DELL'ACNUR

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Si è tenuta a Ginevra, dall'8 all'11 marzo corrente, la 32a Riunione del Comitato Permanente del Comitato Esecutivo dell'Alto Commissariato delle Nazioni Unite per i Rifugiati (ACNUR).

Mons. Fortunatus Nwachukwu, Consigliere della Missione Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite e delle Istituzioni Specializzate, ha pronunciato il 10 marzo scorso, l'intervento che pubblichiamo di seguito:

• INTERVENTO DI MONS. FORTUNATUS NWACHUKWU

Mr. Chairperson, the refugee situation in Africa remains a deep scar on the human family everywhere. The precarious and tragic condition of these millions of persons forcibly uprooted from their villages and their lands calls for concrete and prompt decisions to alleviate their suffering and to protect their rights. The international community should no longer delay an already overdue response. Such a delay would imply acceptance of a double standard in solidarity at the expenses of the voiceless and most marginalised people.

Some positive signs were given in the past year when voluntary and organized repatriation of refugees had started to normalize life for tens of thousand of them. But the whole process is clouded now by insufficient funding and by the worsening of violence and ill-treatment of the displaced population of Darfur (Sudan) where the humanitarian situation is critical. Systematic attacks on the civil populations, the destruction of infrastructures and entire villages and the elimination of livestock and crops lead to a widespread displacement of the civilian population. The attacks are brutal and violent and human rights violations are a daily occurrence. Particularly vulnerable are women subjected to rape and other forms of degradation. An environmental disaster is being created that it will take years to restore.

The various UN Reports are quite clear and forceful and describe many of the events as crimes against humanity and/or war crimes, "not less serious and heinous than genocide¹".

If a person is lucky, he or she becomes a refugee by crossing the border and ends up in a refugee camp in Chad, where protection and some relative safety may be provided. If individuals and families stay behind, they end up by joining one of the largest internally displaced populations in the world, often at high risk and where security can not be guaranteed. The African Union military monitors are insufficient in number; they lack the necessary logistical support and can hardly let their presence be felt. The Sudanese authorities do not seem able or be in a position to protect the rights of their own people.

One has to conclude that the protection needs for the people remaining in Darfur are hardly met, despite the courageous presence and assistance of the UNHCR, of other UN agencies, of so many NGOs. Still the total victimized and displaced population cannot be reached.

Mr. Chairperson, confronted by such a complex situation, a strong UN leadership and an overall coordination by one agency of external assistance and protection to IDP camps and other places of their concentration appear urgent.

Here lies an international responsibility which points directly to us, to the human family of nations. The broader question should again be raised: what institution will be structurally responsible for the protection of IDPs? As international community we should develop a reliable system which effectively protects those staying in their own country, but displaced from their homes.

The Holy See Delegation encourages a further development of a clearer system of responsibility for IDPs, while realizing that this involvement in protection and human rights issues will require larger human and financial resources and, above all, the political will to act, to intervene and take the arms off the hands of aggressors. The longer the delay to act, the greater the risk of more uprooted and abused people and of undermining hard-achieved peace agreements.

The way forward is to stop the flow of arms into the conflict, to hold individuals accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity, to take action now and give new hope to Africa and to all refugees.

1 Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur to the United Nations Secretary.-General. Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1564 of 18 September 2004. Geneva, 25 January 2005[00309-02.01]
[Original text: English]
