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INTERVENTO DELL'OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE PRESSO L'UFFICIO DELLE NAZIONI UNITE A GINEVRA, IN OCCASIONE DELLA COMMEMORAZIONE DEL 60° ANNIVERSARIO DELLA DICHIARAZIONE UNIVERSALE DEI DIRITTI DELL'UOMO

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite a Ginevra, S.E. Mons. Silvano M. Tomasi, ha pronunciato il 12 dicembre scorso in occasione della Commemorazione del 60° Anniversario della Dichiarazione Universale dei Diritti dell'Uomo:

● INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. SILVANO M. TOMASI

Mr. President,

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is a memorable moment in the history of human coexistence and a great expression of a universal juridical civilization founded on human dignity and oriented toward peace. The Delegation of the Holy See fully supports the decision of Human Rights Council to specially observe the 60th anniversary of this Declaration. After the horrors of World War II, the Declaration solemnly reaffirmed the supreme value of the human dignity of every person and people, without any distinction based on sex, social condition, ethnicity, culture, or political, religious or philosophical convictions. With this document, human dignity finally is recognized as the essential value on which rests an international order that is truly peaceful and sustainable. The UDHR proclaims: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." (art. 1) The Holy See celebrates the 60th Anniversary of the UDHR, first, by recalling the great sense of unity, solidarity and responsibility that led the United Nations to proclaim universal human rights as a response to all persons and peoples weighed down by the violation of their dignity, a task that even today challenges us. Then, it has promoted events, educational programs, assistance initiatives worldwide, in particular for children, women and vulnerable groups, so that God, as His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI said on December 10, 2008, "may allow us to build a world where every human being will feel accepted in his/her full dignity, and where relations among persons and among peoples are based on respect, dialogue and solidarity." Thirdly, it has highlighted once more the fact that human rights are at risk if not rooted on the ethical foundation of our common humanity as created by God who has given everyone the gifts of intelligence and freedom.

2. Human rights have an indispensable social role. They remain "the most effective strategy for eliminating inequalities between countries and social groups, and for increasing security."¹ For the protection of individuals and society, the Holy See incessantly has reaffirmed the centrality of human rights and the role of the United Nations Organization in upholding this common patrimony of the human family. Human freedom and creativity have given rise to different models of political and economic organization in the context of different cultures and historical experiences. "But it is one thing to affirm a legitimate pluralism of "forms of freedom", and another to deny any universality or intelligibility to the nature of man or to the human experience."² A healthy realism, therefore, is the foundation of human rights, that is, the acknowledgement of what is real and inscribed in the human person and in creation. When a breach is caused between what is claimed and what is real through the search of so-called 'new' human rights, a risk emerges to reinterpret the accepted human rights vocabulary to promote *mere desires* and measures that, in turn, become a source of discrimination and injustice and the fruit of self-serving ideologies. By speaking of the right to life, of respect for the family, of marriage as the union between a man and a woman, of freedom of religion and conscience, of the limits of the authority of the State before fundamental values and rights, nothing new or revolutionary is said and both, the letter and the spirit of the Declaration are upheld, and coherence with the nature of things and the common good of society is preserved.

3. This anniversary of the Declaration leads us also to reflect on its implementation. In a world of too many hungry people, too many violent conflicts, too many persons persecuted for their beliefs, there remains a long road to walk and the duty to eliminate every discrimination so that all persons can enjoy their inherent equal dignity. In pursuing this goal, there are reasons for hope in the developments that have been generated by the UDHR. The family, "the natural and fundamental group unit of society" (art.16,3), can be the first 'agency' of protection and promotion of human dignity and fundamental rights. This is in line with the UDHR as well as with the Holy See's *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, whose 25th anniversary is celebrated this year.³ The United Nations Organization and its specialized Agencies, this Council in particular, are called to faithfully translate the principles of the UDHR into action by supporting States in the adoption of effective policies truly focused on the rights and sense of responsibility of everyone. International pacts and regional agreements derived from the UDHR coalesce into a body of international law that serve as necessary reference.

4. In conclusion, Mr. President, every human being "is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms" set forth in the UDHR can be fully realized. (art.28) Every human being has the right to an integral development and "the sacred right" to live in peace⁴. On such premises, human rights are not just entitlement to privileges. They are rather the expression and the fruit of what is noblest in the human spirit: dignity, aspiration to freedom and justice, search for what is good, and the practice of solidarity. In the light of the tragic experiences of the past and of today, the human family can unite around these values and essential principles, as a duty toward the weakest and needier and toward future generations.

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080418_unvisit_en.html²http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1995/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_05101995_address-to-uno_en.html³http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/family/documents/rc_pc_family_doc_19831022_family-rights_en.html⁴UN General Assembly, *Declaration on the Right of People to Peace*, Resolution 39/11, 12 November 1984, p.1[01952-02.01] [Original text: English][B0790-XX.01]
