



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHL
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INTERVENTO DELL'OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE PRESSO L'ORGANIZZAZIONI DELLE NAZIONI UNITE NEL CORSO DELLA 55MA SESSIONE DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE

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È in corso a New York la 55ma Sessione dell'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite.

Pubblichiamo di seguito il testo dell'intervento di S.E. Mons. Renato Raffaele Martino, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso le Nazioni Unite a New York, Capo della Delegazione della Santa Sede, dinanzi al Terzo Comitato, sul Tema dei rifugiati, dei rimpatriati, degli sfollati e su questioni umanitarie, pronunciato il 6 novembre 2000:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. RENATO R. MARTINO

Madam Chairperson:

The Holy See welcomes this opportunity to take part in the discussion of issues relating to refugees, returnees, displaced persons and humanitarian questions and especially the Report of the High Commissioner.

My Delegation wishes to thank the High Commissioner for that Report. As usual, it provides a wealth of information which will be helpful to the work of the Catholic Church through its various relief agencies. In this light, Madame Chairperson, you will find the *Jubilee Charter of Rights of Displaced Persons*, which was issued at the Vatican this past June, and is annexed to the text of this intervention.

From the very beginning, the work of the United Nations regarding refugees and displaced persons has been marked by steady success and must be applauded. People returning to their homes and homeland, being settled and reintegrated are the commendable work of the High Commissioner.

Unfortunately, the work is not yet completed as there continue to be situations where people are forced from their homes. This remains one of the great tragedies of our time.

According to the Report, the number of persons of concern to the High Commissioner increased slightly during 1999 and many of these are victims of conflict.

The Report states that the population of concern increased by about eight hundred thousand persons to 22.3 million and that 11.6 million of these are refugees and 4.08 million are internally displaced.

Almost half, and in some places up to seventy per cent of these refugees, are children who become refugees at the rate of five thousand per day. Some of them have lived their entire life in a refugee camp. These are the most vulnerable of the vulnerable and need special protection in their right to life, security, education, health care, guidance and supervision, identity, the love of a family and the hope for a future.

The Report also shows us that poorer countries have borne the heaviest burden of receiving refugees. In many countries, the quality of protection and accommodation has dramatically declined.

These countries need the solidarity of the international community, particularly of the wealthier nations, who accept only a small part of this burden. Without concrete signs of support, the humanitarian crises of today will surely continue into the future.

In discussing the role of the High Commissioner, the Report points out the fact that the protection of the fundamental rights of all people is the key to changing the situation of refugees and displaced persons. In this light, the Holy See continues to call for a peaceful solution of conflicts and the recognition and respect of human dignity. The Holy See is also convinced that the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms must never be conditioned by economic and political interests.

In the spirit of that recognition, the Holy See encourages the development of a clearer system of responsibility for internally displaced persons and welcomes the work of the upcoming World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. Hopefully that Conference will bring a better awareness that ...different cultures are but different ways of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence. (Pope John Paul II, Address to the General Assembly, 5 October 1995) and that race, culture, religion, language or ethnic origin must never be used to force people from their homes and homeland.

The number of people seeking refuge from war or persecution across borders or within their own countries is staggering and assisting these victims is increasingly complex and challenging. At a time when the movement and insecurity of uprooted peoples is increasing globally, we also witness an erosion of the international refugee protection regime and the erection of new barriers to asylum.

Protection and security must be seen as the most important role of the Office of the High Commissioner, especially at a time when there are other international and local agencies that can provide necessary humanitarian assistance and depend upon the umbrella of protection that only the United Nations can provide.

Finally, the Holy See welcomes the special attention that was given to family protection issues and the important role that the family plays in ensuring protection and well-being of its members. It is no surprise to my Delegation to read in paragraph 21 of the Report that ...experience has shown that the family unit has a better chance of reintegrating in their home or integrating in a new country than do individual refugees.

The Holy See will continue to support the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees and will also continue to pray that there will soon be a time in this new Millennium when we will read that the Report regarding refugees and displaced persons has nothing to announce but good news.

Thank you, Madame Chairperson

