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Alle ore 11 di questa mattina, nella Sala Clementina, il Santo Padre ha ricevuto in Udienza, in occasione della presentazione delle Lettere Credenziali le Loro Eccellenze i Signori Ambasciatori di: Nigeria, Malawi, Kenya, Cipro, India, Eritrea, Ciad.

Di seguito pubblichiamo i discorsi consegnati dal Papa ai 7 Ambasciatori degli Stati sopra enunciati, nonché i cenni biografici essenziali di ciascuno:

- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI NIGERIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR SAMUEL A. OTUYELU

Mr Ambassador,

As you present the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Holy See I offer you good wishes and welcome you to the Vatican. This occasion, as well as the cordial meeting which I had three months ago with your President, His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo, rekindle the memories of my Pastoral Visit to your country in 1998: the people of Nigeria remain dear to me and ever close to my heart. I ask you to convey to President Obasanjo my greetings and the assurance of my prayers for the nation, especially at this time when there have been tensions and fresh outbreaks of violence in different parts of the country.

Indeed, the Federal Republic of Nigeria is facing a very delicate and even critical moment in its history. The transition from military rule to a democratically elected government was made more than a year ago, yet, as Your Excellency has observed, the challenges remain daunting. The individual peoples and States continue to struggle with various problems, both old and new: ethnic rivalries and religious antagonism, erupting in violent clashes which have already claimed many lives, represent a major obstacle to the continuing development and well-being of Nigeria; corruption, sometimes rampant, at various levels of public administration further compounds the difficulties of an already preoccupying situation. These difficulties pose serious threats to progress along the path of national unity and solidarity, and the country's social equilibrium itself is placed at risk.

The present moment therefore presents an urgent call to all Nigerians to work together to rid society of everything that offends the dignity of the human person or violates human rights. This means reconciling differences, overcoming ethnic strife, and injecting honesty, efficiency and competence into all aspects of life in society. In the Nigeria of the new millennium, there should be no place for intimidation and domination of the poor and the weak, for arbitrary exclusion of individuals and groups from political life, for the misuse of authority or the abuse of power. In fact, the key to resolving economic, political, cultural and ideological conflicts — whether in Nigeria or in Africa as a whole — is justice; and justice is not complete without commitment to a real and effective solidarity, without an attitude of humble, generous service to the common good.

It is precisely to foster such attitudes and to help peoples, states and nations to build a world ever more united in the bonds of friendship, brotherhood and solidarity that the Holy See is actively present in the international community. The Catholic Church, in fact, is a ready and eager partner with all Nigerians as they strive to bring about the conditions necessary for a more just and peaceful society. In fact, both the Church and the political community, though independent and self-governing, work for the personal and social well-being of the same human beings. For her part, the Church "contributes to the wider application of justice and charity within and between nations. By preaching the truth of the Gospel and shedding light on all areas of human activity through

her teaching and the example of the faithful, she shows respect for the political freedom and responsibility of citizens and fosters these values" (Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 76).

Chief among these freedoms and responsibilities, and the cornerstone of all human rights, is freedom of religion. For this freedom is an irreplaceable component of the good of individuals and of society as a whole. I am pleased, therefore, to hear you reconfirm your Government's commitment to work for tolerance, peaceful coexistence and mutual respect among the different religious traditions present in Nigeria. Indeed, the freedom of individuals in their quest for truth and in the corresponding profession of their religious faith must be specifically guaranteed within the juridical structure of society. That is to say, religious freedom must be recognized and confirmed by civil law as a personal and inalienable right and must be safeguarded from any kind of coercion by individuals, social groups or any human power (cf. *Message for the 1988 World Day of Peace*, 1). This right to freedom of religion is not just one human right among many others but is rather a most fundamental right. Its observance is a true measure of a society's commitment to uphold and defend the dignity and rights of all its members.

It is this context of religious freedom which will enable the Catholic faithful in Nigeria to continue to cooperate with their fellow citizens in building the nation's well-being, progress and peace. Not only does an environment of religious tolerance enable all citizens to be actively involved in national life, but it also allows the Church to continue her mission of service to all Nigerians, regardless of religious affiliation, especially in the areas of education, health care and social services.

Mr Ambassador, as you begin your mission I assure you of every cooperation and assistance as you fulfill your duties. I am confident that your efforts will serve to further strengthen the friendly relations which already exist between the Holy See and the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Upon Your Excellency and all the people of your country I invoke the abundant blessing of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Samuel A. Otuyelu,Ambasciatore di Nigeria

Ènato il 9 agosto 1943.

Èsposato, con cinque figli.

Dopo aver frequentato corsi universitari ad Ibadan ed in Canada, ha esercitato l'insegnamento e, dal 1973 al 1978, è stato direttore del quotidiano nigeriano "Daily Times", ricoprendo poi i seguenti incarichi nel servizio diplomatico del suo Paese: Addetto di Ambasciata in Francia (1978-1982); Consigliere presso il Ministero degli Esteri (1982 - 1984); - Ministro Consigliere in Uganda (1984-1990); Direttore Generale Aggiunto - Dipartimento politico del Ministero degli Esteri (1990-1991); Direttore Generale Aggiunto - Segreteria del Ministero degli Esteri (1992- 1993); Ministro della Missione Permanente presso l'O.N.U. (1994-1998); Direttore del Personale - Ministero degli Esteri (1998-1999); Ambasciatore in Jugoslavia (1999). Dal 1999 è Ambasciatore anche a Madrid.

[02819-02.02] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL MALAWI PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR SILAS SAMUEL NCOZANA

Mr Ambassador,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you today and to accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Malawi to the Holy See. I am grateful for the good wishes which you have brought from President Bakili Muluzi. Please convey to His Excellency my own cordial greetings, and assure him of my prayers to Almighty God for the peace and well-being of the nation.

You have suggested that this is a time of both promise and threat for Malawi. With the coming of democracy, society has made notable gains in many areas and that is a cause for satisfaction. Yet all Malawians recognize

the need to strengthen still further the structures of democratic life, which are always more fragile than they seem. Unless a true sense of participation and of shared responsibility for the common good takes deep root in national life, there will always be a threat of division and violence, as people are tempted to choose force rather than dialogue as the way of organizing the political community. The recent elections to which you have referred are a hopeful sign that Malawi is moving in the right direction towards the integral development of all sectors of society. To follow this path does not mean uncritically to adopt modes of social organization which may be appropriate in other societies but inappropriate in Malawi. Your people must shape a democratic life which is truly African and which respects the genius of Malawi's culture. But there are values common to every healthy society and every well-functioning democracy; and these point the way to the future for which the people of Malawi are now striving.

You have mentioned the daunting problems facing your country, and the Holy See shares your sense of concern. Some of the problems are not new. Malawi has long been troubled by endemic poverty which creates a situation of dependence upon donor countries. The causes are both internal and external, and any attempt to deal with the problem must also be both national and global.

Education is clearly a vital factor in a country's development, since ignorance and poverty always conspire to undermine human dignity and the fabric of society. All education is inspired by a particular understanding of life and of the human condition. In this sense religious education plays a unique role in the educational process since it is never a mere imparting of knowledge about religion in general but reaches into the recesses of each individual's conscience and engages each one's inviolable right to freedom in this basic area of life. That is why the State is obliged to respect the choices which parents make with regard to the religious education of their children. It is the State's duty to ensure their citizens' freedom to make those choices and not to seek to limit or control them.

The Catholic Church has always dedicated considerable resources to the field of education, and this is also the case in Malawi, as you have graciously acknowledged. The education which the Church promotes looks to the integral development of the human person. Its purpose is to cultivate the intellect and develop the capacity for right judgement, to help young people to assimilate their cultural heritage and form a sense of moral and ethical values in readiness for their future professional, civic, family and national responsibilities (cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, *Gravissimum Educationis*, 5). An all-round education seeks to develop every aspect of the individual – physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual. For there is an ecology of human growth which means that if any one of these elements is overlooked all the others suffer. This is the vision of education which ought to inspire Malawi's leaders as they strive to raise educational levels.

You have also mentioned the health problems now facing your nation, as HIV/AIDS casts a heavy shadow upon the land. The world is looking to medical research to provide an answer to the lethal virus, and there are signs of hope on this front. But in the meantime there are vast challenges for countries like yours: to tend the sick; to care for those who survive, especially the orphans; to increase general awareness of the nature and extent of the problem; to resist the moral erosion which favours the spread of the disease; to stand guard against life-styles which aggravate that erosion; to strengthen the family in every possible way, recognizing that it is the basic unit of human society and the place where moral virtue and the culture of life must first take root. In these tasks, Malawi will always find in the Catholic Church a reliable partner. Catholic health-care has been, as you say, part of your history; and it will be no less a part of your future. Both the needs of your people and the demands of the Gospel impose this duty upon us.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that as you fulfil your mission the cordial relations which exist between the Republic of Malawi and the Holy See will be further strengthened and enriched. I offer you my best wishes and assure you that the offices of the Holy See will always be ready to assist you. Upon Your Excellency and all the citizens of your beloved nation I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Sila Samuel Ncozana,Ambasciatore del Malawi

Ènato nel 1942, in Zimbabwe.

Èsposato ed ha cinque figli.

Si è laureato in Teologia nel 1981, a Princeton (USA), conseguendo poi un Dottorato all'Università di Aberdeen (Scozia).

Ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Vice Segretario e poi Segretario Generale della "Church of Central Africa Presbyterian" (1975-1995); Presidente della Commissione Interreligiosa "Public Affairs" per la transizione al multipartitismo (1992-1994); Docente di Storia della Chiesa e "Teologia pratica" in Sud Africa e Malawi (1995-1997); Ambasciatore in Tanzania (1999).

ÈAmbasciatore anche a Bonn.

[02820-02.01] [Original text: English]

● DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL KENYA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR BOAZ KIDIGA MBAYA

Mr Ambassador,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which His Excellency President Daniel T. Arap Moi has appointed you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kenya to the Holy See. I am grateful for the President's good wishes and ask you kindly to assure him of my continued prayers for the progress, peace and prosperity of your country.

You have referred to the Holy See's efforts to promote justice and peace in the world, and it is precisely this endeavour which characterizes the Holy See's presence in the international community. In fact, the fruitful and friendly relations existing between us are inspired by the shared conviction that the dignity and rights of the human person must be upheld and defended at all times and under all circumstances.

Your presence here today, Mr Ambassador, is a sign of your Government's readiness to work for that justice and peace for which the peoples of Kenya — and all of Africa — so ardently long. A real commitment to these ideals is in fact a necessary prerequisite for authentic development and true progress. Thus I renew today the hope which I expressed five years ago while standing on Kenyan soil: may every citizen of your country, regardless of religion, ethnic background or social class, live in freedom and help to build a society based on unwavering respect for human dignity and human rights (cf. *Address at Departure from Nairobi*, 20 September 1995, 2). This is the only sure path for promoting justice and development, for combatting unemployment, for giving hope to the poor and the suffering, for resolving conflicts through dialogue, and for establishing a true and lasting solidarity between all sectors of society.

Both in Africa and throughout the world the Catholic Church is deeply committed to the struggle for integral human development, and the Holy See is very much involved in efforts to increase understanding and harmony between peoples and nations. Making world leaders ever more aware of their responsibilities in these areas and of the priorities that they must set for themselves and for their countries' institutions is an essential element in this undertaking. Chief among these priorities is deepening people's understanding of their personal rights and responsibilities. This is not merely a question of making knowledge and information available; it is also a matter of imparting a keen sense of responsibility for the common good, an attitude which prepares the way for enlightened participation in public affairs on the part of all sectors of society. This is the soul of social progress, the key to the future, the necessary element for truly effective programmes of development.

As is made clear by the unresolved and even increasing difficulties being experienced in many parts of Africa, not least of all in your own region of the Continent, progress is not a simple, automatic and limitless process, as though societies were able to advance endlessly towards some sort of perfection (cf. Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 27). While social and political development are necessary for achieving and maintaining peace and security within and among nations, they cannot be authentically attained without respect for human rights and

fundamental freedoms. Each country's good governance and development can only be the result of concerted action, especially in what concerns the defense of human dignity, the protection of human rights and the administration of justice. In the last analysis, all basic problems of justice have as their main cause the fact that the person is not sufficiently respected, taken into consideration or loved for what he or she is. People must learn or learn anew to look at one another, to listen to one another, to walk together (cf. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 16 January 1993, 6).

In this context I wish to express once more my hope that the international community will show an ever greater preparedness to address the imbalances and injustices which are built into the structures of the global economy and which have serious repercussions for the peoples of Africa. One initiative which I have sought to bring before world opinion in this year of the Great Jubilee has been debt relief for countries such as yours; but this cannot be an isolated gesture. It must be accompanied by a more comprehensive reassessment of the ways in which the world economy functions, especially at a time when the forces of globalization are becoming increasingly powerful. The globalization process brings a promise of greater cohesion and prosperity. But there is also a danger that it will aggravate economic imbalances, leaving developing countries like your own still more seriously disadvantaged. I assure you, Mr Ambassador, that the Holy See intends to continue to do all that it can to convince world leaders and institutions that economic globalization must be accompanied and "humanized" by "the globalization of solidarity". Without this it is unlikely that we shall succeed in building a future worthy of humanity.

In all these various undertakings, of course, Kenya's Catholics are eager to lend their support and make their contribution to the nation's life and development. This in fact is part of the spiritual mission which has been entrusted to the Church by her Divine Founder, and in fidelity to this mission she seeks to serve all people, especially those most in need. Their faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ impels Christians to respond to the cry of the uneducated, the sick, the suffering and the marginalized. In cooperation with their fellow citizens, the members of the Catholic community will continue their efforts in the service of the common good, and I thank Your Excellency for your recognition of the work of the Catholic Church in Kenya and of her positive influence on society.

Mr Ambassador, I extend to you my best wishes for your tenure as your nation's representative to the Holy See and assure you of all necessary assistance in fulfilling your high mission. May Almighty God abundantly bless you and your fellow citizens.

S.E. il Signor Boaz Kidiga Mbaya,Ambasciatore del Kenya

Ènato il 14 marzo 1951.

Èsposato ed ha tre figli.

Ha conseguito Diplomi universitari in Letteratura, Scienze Politiche e Relazioni Internazionali.

Dopo aver prestato servizio presso il Ministero degli Interni e la Presidenza della Repubblica, è entrato nel Servizio Diplomatico, ove ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Officiale al Ministero degli Esteri (1980-1983); Segretario di Ambasciata dapprima in Rwanda (1983-1985) e quindi nei Paesi Bassi (1985-1988); Membro della Segreteria personale del Ministro degli Esteri (1988-1991); Consigliere in Germania (1992-1994) e quindi a Londra (1994-1996); Direttore del Dipartimento per 1'Africa, Ministero degli Esteri (1996-1997); Direttore della Sezione politica del Ministero degli Esteri (1997-2000).

Dal giugno 2000 è Ambasciatore anche in Francia.

[02821-02.01] [Original text: English]

● DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI CIPRO PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR CHRISTOS N. PSILOGENIS

Mr Ambassador,

I am happy to extend to you a cordial welcome and to receive the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Cyprus to the Holy See. With gratitude for the greetings which you have brought from your Government, I ask you kindly to convey to His Excellency President Glafcos Clerides the assurance of my prayers for the peace and well-being of the nation.

Despite recent attempts to pursue negotiations, Cyprus is still in search of a solution to the problem of division which has long troubled the Island. The roots of the problem are deep and complex, and it is clear that there is no quick and simple solution. But neither is there cause for despair. For the roots of a solution lie still deeper in the soil of Cypriot culture, which has been imbued with the richness of the Gospel from the very dawn of Christianity. In the light of the Gospel, dialogue is seen to be the way to move beyond confrontation and to achieve the "dignity, justice and security" of which Your Excellency has spoken. This is why the Holy See insists upon the need to build a culture of dialogue at the international level, and especially in Europe at this time of growing integration. European unity requires that differences be negotiated and settled in a way that serves the common good. And if this is to happen, the only path forward is that of open and sincere dialogue.

What is needed in the first place is a genuine desire for peace, and this is surely true of the vast majority of Cypriots, who are weary of division and long for a more tranquil life. The desire for peace is linked to a recognition that confrontation is futile. It can only create greater problems, when it does not degenerate into open hostility.

Dialogue also entails an awareness of what it is that separates, together with a willingness to trust in the good faith of the other party. Without this there can be no true meeting of minds and hearts but merely two ultimately pointless monologues. Dialogue involves a readiness to seek what is true, good and just in every person and group. It brings human beings into contact with one another as members of one human family, with all the wealth of their various cultures and histories. It rests upon recognition of the inalienable dignity of every human being and upon respect for the objective and inviolable demands of a universal moral law. Through dialogue, people discover not only one another but also the legitimate hopes and peaceful aspirations hidden in their hearts.

There are some who question whether the call for such dialogue is realistic or indeed whether the process itself is possible. The Holy See will not cease to support Cyprus in the attempt to pursue the slow and difficult path of negotiations, and the Catholic community in your land will not fail to commit itself ever more deeply to the task of building the bridges which make dialogue possible. Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is an important part of that dialogue of peace of which not only Cyprus but the whole of Europe and indeed the entire world has urgent need.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that as you undertake your mission the bonds of friendship and cooperation which exist between the Republic of Cyprus and the Holy See will be further strengthened and enriched. I offer you my good wishes and assure you that the offices of the Roman Curia will always be ready to assist you. Upon Your Excellency and your fellow-citizens I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Signor Christos N. PsilogenisAmbasciatore di Cipro

Ènato il 6 novembre 1943.

Èsposato ed ha due figlie.

Ha conseguito il Dottorato in Scienze Economiche e Politiche presso la *Vrije Universitei* di Bruxelles.

Diplomatico di carriera, ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Addetto presso il Ministero degli Esteri (1971-1976); Segretario di Ambasciata ad Atene (1976-1978); Segretario e quindi Consigliere di Ambasciata a Bruxelles e presso le Comunità Europee (1978-1983); Consigliere di Ambasciata a Londra (1983-1986); Capo della Sezione per i Ciprioti all'Estero, Ministero degli Esteri (1986-1989); Ministro Plenipotenziario e Capo della

Sezione per le Comunità Europee, Ministero degli Esteri (1989-1992); Ambasciatore a Praga, accreditato anche in Slovacchia ed Ungheria. Rappresentante presso l'O.S.C.E. (1992-1996); Ambasciatore a Madrid, accreditato anche in Argentina, Uruguay e presso la W.T.O. (1996-1999); Direttore della Sezione Politica del Ministero degli Esteri (1999-2000).

ÈAmbasciatore residente in Germania.

[02825-02.01] [Original text: English]

● DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DELL'INDIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR NIRANJAN NATVERLAL DESAI

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you today to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of India to the Holy See. I thank you for the kind greetings you have expressed on behalf of President Kocheril Raman Narayanan and the Government and people of India, and I ask you kindly to convey my good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the peace, well-being and harmony of the nation.

My thoughts often turn to your country, which I have had the joy of visiting on two occasions. During those visits, I had the opportunity of meeting a people shaped by ancient cultures and religions and time-honoured wisdom, which continue to play a vital role in the life of society. India has been greatly enriched by its variety of peoples, traditions and languages, and Indian society can take pride in its long-standing respect and esteem for this rich patrimony. In the midst of a great and fascinating diversity, a vision of a united nation has emerged over the centuries in the works of philosophers, mystics, writers and outstanding statesmen, who have made a significant contribution to your history and have enabled your country's specific voice to be heard in the world community.

You have emphasized India's commitment to peace and friendship with all nations. The promotion of peace is one of the major challenges facing the international community at the beginning of the new millennium. The world which until recently lay in the shadow of the threat of conflict between two opposing blocs continues to be threatened by old and new rivalries between peoples, and by the increasing gap between rich and poor sectors of society, a gap which risks becoming more and more radical as globalization of the economy and of technology increases. Solid and lasting foundations for peace demand that the defence and the promotion of the dignity of the human person become the guiding principle of all aspects of life. Likewise, the common good must become the overriding commitment of all those who bear responsibility for the life of nations (cf. *Message for the World Day of Peace 1999*, No. 1).

Human dignity is a transcendent value, independent of place or circumstance, and is an essential feature of the truth about man, which can be ignored only to the detriment of peoples and nations. Recognition of the innate dignity of all the members of the human family, and recognition of the equality and inalienability of their rights is a fundamental premise of the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* and the foundation of liberty, justice and peace in the world. Failure to respect this dignity leads to the various and often tragic forms of discrimination, exploitation, social unrest and even national and international conflict with which we are unfortunately so familiar.

Indian society is permeated by a deep awareness of the importance of the spiritual and transcendent dimension of human life. Your country is renowned for its respect for the religious traditions followed by its peoples, a respect guaranteed by the Indian Constitution, which recognizes the right of all to practise their religion freely. Religious traditions play a vital part in the life of the nation, and are a source of joy, strength and meaning to its citizens. They make an essential contribution to the genuine progress of society by drawing attention to the most profound human questions and values. They likewise indicate the spiritual and moral standards of growth which should always accompany economic, scientific and technological advances.

It is to be hoped that the mutual respect and harmony which has traditionally prevailed among the followers of the various religions in India will continue and become even more stable. In recent times there have been moments of tension, and even tragic incidents where ethnic and religious groups have not respected the dignity and rights which are basic to peaceful co-existence. Recourse to violence in the name of religious belief is a perversion of the very teachings of the major religions. The good of society requires that the right to religious freedom enshrined in law be reaffirmed and given effective protection. In accordance with India's best traditions, there is a need for dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation among the followers of the various religions, in order to enable all together to work for a civilization built upon the universal values of solidarity, justice and freedom. As I emphasized on the occasion of my meeting with religious leaders in Delhi: "Religious leaders in particular have the duty to do everything possible to ensure that religion is what God intends it to be – a source of goodness, respect, harmony and peace!" (*Address to Religious Leaders*, 7 November 1999, No. 3). While we hold firmly to what we believe and do not abandon our own convictions, it is essential that we all strive to listen respectfully to one another in order to discern all that is good and holy, all that makes for cooperation and peace.

I thank you for your kind remarks about the contribution of Christianity in the course of the last almost two thousand years to your country. The Catholic community which has been present in India for all that time is small in relation to the whole population, but its members are proud to place themselves at the service of their fellow-citizens in accordance with the example of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve (cf. *Mt* 20:28). In her various activities, the Church seeks no special privileges, but merely wishes to exercise her rights freely and to have these rights respected. In this way she will continue to be able to pursue her spiritual and humanitarian mission, and make her particular contribution to building a society that is a true home to all its members.

Mr Ambassador, it is my hope that as you undertake your responsibilities the bonds of friendship between the Holy See and India will be increasingly strengthened. You can rest assured that the various offices of the Roman Curia are ready to assist you in fulfilling this mission. Upon yourself and all the beloved people of your Nation I invoke abundant divine blessings.

S.E. il Signor Niranjan Natverlal DesaiAmbasciatore dell'India

Ènato il 14 giugno 1942.

Èsposato ed ha un figlio.

Diplomato in Lingua e Letteratura inglese nonché in Storia.

Diplomatico di carriera, ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Segretario a Nairobi (1967-1968), a Mogadiscio (1968-1969) e presso il Ministero degli Esteri (1969-1973); Console Generale a New York (1973-1977); Consigliere a Kuwait City (1977-1980); Dirigente presso il Ministero degli Esteri (1980-1981); Ministro a Londra (1981-1984) e a Washington (1984-1987); Alto Commissario a Kampala (1987-1992); Console Generale ad Amburgo (1992); Direttore Generale dell'*Indian Council for Cultural Relations* (1992-1994); Segretario Aggiunto del Dipartimento per 1'Africa, Ministero degli Esteri (1994); Capo del Protocollo del Ministero degli Esteri (1994-1996); Ambasciatore in Venezuela (1997-2000).

ÈAmbasciatore anche in Svizzera.

[02823-02.01] [Original text: English]

● DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI ERITREA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR BERAKY GEBRESLASSIE

Mr Ambassador,

I extend a warm welcome to you as I accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Eritrea to the Holy See. Reaffirming my affection and esteem for the people of

your country, I wish to lend my whole-hearted support to the peace accord which in these days has been signed by your Government and that of Ethiopia: by means of this treaty a formal agreement now puts an end to almost three years of a confrontation which has left untold suffering, death and destruction in its wake. I take this opportunity to renew my appeal to all parties to work with courage and vision to overcome the continuing difficulties so that a just and lasting peace based on mutual understanding, reconciliation and cooperation may reign once more in the area.

In this regard, I commend those world leaders and statesmen whose efforts and personal intervention helped to bring about the cease-fire; in particular I acknowledge the effective assistance of the Organization of African Unity in brokering the accord which has silenced arms and brought an end to open hostilities. This Pan-African organization is in a uniquely privileged position to foster political, economic, social and cultural cooperation on the continent, and can be effective in promoting peaceful solutions to disputes between African nations. We must hope that the various member States, as well as the worldwide family of nations, will support the OAU in these tasks, and make it possible for this international body to play an increasingly positive role in the development of Africa and her peoples in the new millennium.

The recourse to conflict, even when seeming to resolve the problems at hand, succeeds only in exacerbating the difficulties and disseminating further tragedy and destruction. It is for this reason that in every part of the world the Holy See encourages peoples and their governments to rise above the "culture of force" and to reject the temptation to violence and armed aggression. Peace, if it is to be genuine and lasting, needs more than external structures and mechanisms; it requires a style of human coexistence marked by mutual respect and by justice. There is no contradiction between reconciliation and justice; reconciliation does not lessen the requirements of justice but seeks to reintegrate individuals and groups into society, and States into the community of Nations, through a renewed and shared sense of responsibility for the common good and, wherever possible, through solidarity with the victims of past injustices.

For all Eritreans, the task ahead is to work together to build a society in which the dignity of the human person and respect for human rights is the norm of conduct for everyone. Drawing on its noblest values and traditions, Eritrea — indeed all of Africa — will find the strength and inspiration to grow in solidarity, justice and well-being.

Mr Ambassador, you have mentioned the new challenges which Eritrea faces as it seeks to ensure a democratic and constitutional form of government for its people. Perhaps the greatest challenge is to be found at the level of education. Indeed, there is no greater investment that a nation can make for itself and its citizens. A society which seeks true development and progress, and which desires to contribute to the true advancement of its members, must give them the means to cultivate an objective understanding of themselves and of the world in which they live, as well as of social, cultural and religious traditions which are different from their own. Likewise, education is the key which makes it possible for citizens to participate in making political choices by electing and holding accountable those who govern them (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, No. 46).

Deeply concerned about the social dimension of human life, the Church contributes to the political order by teaching the inalienable dignity of the human person. She urges her members to take a responsible part in the political, economic and social life of their respective communities, and to imbue all areas of life with the Gospel message of brotherhood, reconciliation and peace. It is for this reason that the Church is deeply committed to education, health care, social services and humanitarian aid, both in your own country, on all the continent of Africa and throughout the world. I thank Your Excellency for your recognition of the contribution made by the Church in this regard in Eritrea.

Mr Ambassador, I ask you kindly to convey to President Issaias Afwerki and your Government my personal greetings and prayerful best wishes for the peace and progress of Eritrea. I assure you of the full cooperation of the Holy See as you take up your high responsibilities, and I wish you every success in your mission. Upon yourself and the beloved people of the State of Eritrea I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

From the Vatican, 14 December 2000

S.E. il Signor Beraky GebreslassieAmbasciatore di Eritrea

Ènato il 22 luglio 1945.

Èsposato ed ha cinque figli.

Ha compiuto studi di Giurisprudenza presso la *Addis Abeba University*.

Dopo aver ricoperto vari gradi nell'esercito eritreo, ha svolto i seguenti uffici: Capo Sezione presso il Dipartimento dell'Educazione (1977-1989); Procuratore Generale (1989-1991); Segretario del Dipartimento dell'Educazione (1991-1993); Ministro dell'Informazione (1993-1999).

ÈAmbasciatore anche in Germania.

[02824-02.01] [Original text: English]

● DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL CIAD PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIGNOR MAHMOUD HISSEIN MAHMOUD

Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,

1. C'est avec plaisir que je souhaite la bienvenue à Votre Excellence à l'occasion de la présentation des Lettres qui L'accréditent comme Ambassadeur extraordinaire et plénipotentiaire de la République du Tchad auprès du Saint-Siège.

Je vous remercie des aimables paroles que vous m'avez adressées, ainsi que des souhaits que vous m'avez transmis de la part de Son Excellence Monsieur Idriss Deby, Président de la République. Je vous saurais gré de Lui faire parvenir les vœux cordiaux que je forme pour sa personne et pour l'accomplissement de sa charge au service du peuple tchadien. Je prie aussi le Tout-Puissant de soutenir l'engagement de tous vos compatriotes à vivre dans la paix et dans la compréhension mutuelle, afin que tous puissent bénéficier d'une existence digne et paisible.

2. Vous m'avez fait part dans votre allocution, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, des efforts déployés dans votre pays afin que la société tout entière progresse vers une démocratie pluraliste respectueuse des droits fondamentaux de l'homme et que des bases solides soient données à l'édification d'un État de droit. En assurant effectivement aux personnes et aux groupes humains des conditions de vie fondées sur la justice et sur le respect mutuel, on trouvera les voies nécessaires pour préserver, de façon durable, la convivialité et l'harmonie au sein de la société tout entière.

Afin de garantir la stabilité et la sécurité, les perspectives économiques nouvelles qui s'ouvrent pour votre pays doivent contribuer avant tout à satisfaire les besoins élémentaires de la population et à éliminer les disparités entre les personnes et entre les régions. Toutefois, il convient que les bienfaits du développement, auxquels aspire l'ensemble des Tchadiens, ne se limitent pas à la croissance légitime du bien-être matériel, mais rendent possible un véritable épanouissement des personnes, des familles et de la société dans toutes leurs dimensions humaines et spirituelles. Si l'on permet à tous, et particulièrement aux plus démunis, de mener une vie décente et conforme à leur vocation humaine, les menaces contre la paix s'éloigneront et des relations sociales solidaires pourront s'établir durablement entre toutes les composantes de la nation.

3. Je me réjouis de savoir que votre pays souhaite apporter une contribution renouvelée au service de la paix dans la région. Au moment où nous entrons dans un nouveau millénaire, il est de plus en plus urgent que l'Afrique tout entière s'engage résolument sur les chemins de la paix et de la réconciliation, pour que cessent enfin les violences dont sont victimes tant de populations innocentes. Les nombreux conflits qui continuent à blesser dramatiquement le continent doivent faire comprendre à tous, comme j'ai déjà eu l'occasion de le souligner, "qu'est arrivée l'heure de changer de route, avec détermination et avec un sens aigu des responsabilités" (*Message pour la journée mondiale de la paix* 2000, n. 8).

Par ailleurs, la rencontre fraternelle et le dialogue sincère entre les croyants, particulièrement entre chrétiens et musulmans, sont des nécessités impérieuses pour "alimenter l'espérance de justice et de paix sans laquelle il n'y a pas d'avenir digne de l'humanité" (*Discours à l'Assemblée interreligieuse*, 28 octobre 1999). Pour maintenir et développer un esprit de confiance et de collaboration entre tous les citoyens, il est donc essentiel pour les responsables civils et religieux de contribuer à renforcer les conditions d'exercice d'une véritable liberté religieuse.

4. Je sais que, dans votre pays, la communauté catholique, qui participe de bien des manières au développement de la nation ainsi qu'à sa cohésion, est respectée et appréciée par les responsables de la vie civile et par l'ensemble de la population. Par son engagement au service de tous les Tchadiens, sans distiction, elle entend témoigner efficacement du message de paix et de réconciliation qu'elle a reçu du Christ. Elle souhaite aussi collaborer avec tous les hommes de bonne volonté afin que la valeur sacrée de la vie de toute personne humaine soit reconnue et respectée, et que disparaisse tout ce qui s'oppose à la vie ou offense la dignité de l'homme. En travaillant pour que grandissent la justice et la solidarité, l'Église désire donner aux hommes et aux femmes d'aujourd'hui des signes d'espérance pour leur avenir et celui de leurs enfants.

Vous me permettrez, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, de saluer chaleureusement, par votre intermédiaire, les Évêques du Tchad ainsi que tous les membres de la communauté catholique. Je souhaite que l'année jubilaire qui s'achève porte d'abondants fruits spirituels, afin que les fidèles soient toujours plus d'ardents disciples du Christ et des témoins généreux de l'amour de Dieu pour l'humanité. Avec tous leurs compatriotes, qu'ils contribuent à l'édification d'une nation unie et fraternelle où chacun se sente pleinement accueilli et respecté !

5. Au moment où commence votre mission, je vous offre mes vœux les meilleurs pour la noble tâche qui vous attend. Je vous assure que vous trouverez toujours ici un accueil attentif et une compréhension cordiale auprès de mes collaborateurs.

J'invoque de grand cœur sur Votre Excellence, sur le peuple tchadien et sur ses dirigeants, l'abondance des Bénédictions divines.

S.E. il Signor Mahmoud Hissein MahmoudAmbasciatore del Ciad

Ènato nel 1949.

Èsposato ed ha tre figli.

Ha conseguito il Dottorato in Matematica ed è diplomato in Ingegneria aeronautica.

Ha ricoperto, tra gli altri, i seguenti uffici: Direttore Generale *ad interim* del Ministero dei Trasporti e delle Telecomunicazioni (1980-1981); Presidente del "*Comité National de gestion des Activités aéronautiques nationales*" (1990-1995); Ministro dei Lavori Pubblici, Trasporti, *Habitat* ed Urbanesimo (1996-1997); Direttore dell'Agenzia Nazionale Aeronautica (1997-1998); Ministro della Funzione Pubblica, Lavoro, Promozione dell'Impiego e Modernizzazione (1998-1999).

ÈAmbasciatore anche a Parigi.

[02822-03.01] [Texte original: Français]

DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE A 7 AMBASCIATORI IN OCCASIONE DELLA PRESENTAZIONE COLLETTIVA DELLE LETTERE CREDENZIALI

Pubblichiamo di seguito il discorso che Giovanni Paolo II ha rivolto questa mattina agli Ecc.mi nuovi Ambasciatori presso la Santa Sede nella Sala Clementina, al termine dello scambio delle Lettere Credenziali di ciascun Ambasciatore al Santo Padre:

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE

Your Excellencies,

1. It is with pleasure that I welcome you to the Vatican to receive the Letters of Credence by which you are accredited as the Ambassadors Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of your respective countries: Nigeria, Malawi, Kenya, Cyprus, India, Eritrea and Chad. I am grateful for the greetings which you bring from your countries' Heads of State and Governments, and I ask you to convey my own good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the peace and prosperity of your peoples.

We are approaching the end of the Year of the Great Jubilee, during which it has been my wish to awaken the consciences of Christians and all people of good will to the importance of beginning the new millennium with a fresh commitment to the construction of a transformed world, a world more solidly founded on fundamental human and moral values. We must hope that those responsible for the destiny of peoples will work untiringly for better relations between individuals, regions and countries, with special attention to the needs of the weakest families, societies and cultures. This is the only way to establish a society characterized by solidarity and the will to live together in harmony.

2. In this regard, I wish to invite the Heads of Government, civil and religious authorities, and all who are engaged in the field of education to be builders of a genuine culture of peace. As could be seen among the young people who attended the World Youth Day here in Rome in August of this year, the young especially desire to see the day when peace will reign on earth. We must not disappoint them. It is our responsibility not to leave them a world in which basic human rights are too often disregarded and tensions often turn into open conflict. An essential step in this direction is to ensure that all children and young people can receive the schooling they need in order to mature into responsible citizens. Such an education will help them to acknowledge and respect laws whose basis is found in the principles of the natural law, and to grow in an attitude of openness to others, including those who are very different in their beliefs and ways.

As the new year approaches, peace is a matter of urgent international concern. In this regard, it is appropriate to reflect on the efforts of international and supra-national institutions to find new ways of organizing economic and social realities, of promoting dialogue and agreement, of resolving conflicts, especially those conflicts which have already been going on for a long time, bringing famine, poverty, disease and the displacement of peoples. We can all rejoice in the most recent accord between the Eritrean and Ethiopian Governments, trusting that it will open the door to a new period of calm and relief in that troubled part of Africa.

3. Your experience teaches you the significance of diplomacy as a means of overcoming the crises affecting many countries across the world, and the importance of a diplomacy of proximity in support of local negotiations. Diplomacy contributes to the democratic processes which enable citizens to play a real part in the development of their own countries. It assists parties in finding the steps which lead to progress in negotiations, and gives new hope to people as they seek better standards of living for themselves and their children. Through the wise use of diplomatic skills and engagement, the aspirations of individuals are realized, and it becomes possible for them to lead full personal and family lives, and to take on their responsibilities in society. In this sense you each have a magnificent opportunity to be authentic builders of justice, peace and harmony in the world.

As you begin your duties as the diplomatic representatives of your countries to the Holy See I offer you my cordial good wishes. I ask the Almighty to bless you and the members of your families, as well as your colleagues and the peoples of the countries you represent. May the commitments you are undertaking bear fruit for the benefit of all.

[02827-02.01] [Original text: English]