

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0567

Martedì 16.10.2001

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE SUL DISARMO ALLA 56.MA SESSIONE DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE

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Riportiamo qui di seguito il testo dell'intervento sul disarmo che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, S.E. Mons. Renato Raffaele Martino, ha pronunciato ieri a New York nel corso della 56.ma Sessione dell'Assemblea Generale dell'O.N.U.:

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

Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation extends its congratulations on your election as Chairman of this important committee and assures you of our cooperation.

We meet at a time of profound distress. The evil of terrorism has struck in unimaginable ways.

The response of the world community to this act of terrorism demands leadership of the highest order.

First, those responsables must be apprehended and brought to justice through due process. This must be done in a way that does not expose even more innocent civilians to death and destruction. Violence on top of violence will only lead to more violence. This is a time for wisdom and perseverance. Justice, not vengeance must be our goal.

"In facing the challenges of the future," Pope John Paul II, on 13 September, in accepting the Credentials of the new Ambassador of the United States to the Holy See, said, "America is called to cherish and live out the deepest values of her national heritage: solidarity and cooperation between peoples; respect for human rights; the justice that is the indispensable condition for authentic freedom and lasting peace." He thus expressed his prayer "that this inhuman act will awaken in the hearts of all the world's people a firm resolve to reject the ways of violence, to combat everything that sows hatred and division within the human family."

We do a disservice to those who have died in this tragedy if we fail to search out the causes. Here a broad canvas of political, economic, social, religious, and cultural factors emerge. The common denominator of these factors is hate. This is a hate that transcends any one people or region. It is a hatred of humanity itself. This hatred kills even the one who hates.

Though poverty is not by itself the cause of terrorism, we cannot successfully combat terrorism if we do not address the worsening disparities between the rich and poor. We must recognize that global disparity is fundamentally incompatible with global security.

Acts of revenge will not cure such hatred. We must rather remove the most obvious elements that spawn the conditions for hatred and violence. Poverty along with other situations of marginalization that engulf the lives of so many of the world's people, including the denial of human dignity, the lack of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, social exclusion, intolerable refugee situations, internal and external displacement and physical or psychological oppression are breeding grounds only waiting to be exploited by terrorists.

In searching out the root causes of terrorism, we are in no way condoning terrorism. But any serious crime reduction effort cannot be confined only to intensified police work. Any serious campaign against terrorism needs to address the social, economic and political conditions that nurture the emergence of terrorism.

The most dramatic example of inequality is the growing gap between the rich and poor. The North, containing a fifth of the world population, controls 80 percent of the wealth and resources; the south, with four-fifths of world population, has only 20 percent of the wealth and resources. This is not only unjust; it is a threat to the stability of the planet. It is the determination of the strong to maintain their position by whatever means necessary, whether military, financial, or political, that is the basis for the systemic inequality in the world. A commitment to equity in the world is the only secure foundation for a more humane world order. Nations must work together to blunt current disparities and improve global stability. A continuation of the unjust status quo will inevitably continue fueling conflicts and will lead to even more conflicts in the decades ahead.

There are conflicts today in several regions that do not even receive world attention. With their ease-of-use and ready availability, small arms are the weapons of choice for today's combatants. The supply of almost limitless quantities of small arms and light weapons through areas of high tension has fuelled numerous civil wars and social chaos. Small arms kill upwards of 10,000 people per week. Most of these victims are civilians.

Even after armed conflict has subsided, small arms often leave a culture of violence which continues to contribute to much of the human misery and economic and social disruption in war-torn societies. As a result, international relief missions are being suspended more frequently as aid workers increasingly find themselves the targets of attacks. Consequently, civilians often suffer increased pain and are deprived longer.

To date, efforts to respond to this situation have resembled a loose web of initiatives with varying interests and objectives involving many countries and organizations. Unlike the effort to ban anti-personnel mines, no country has taken the lead on a comprehensive approach and many States have only grudgingly engaged the issue. Given the international scope of the dilemma, the United Nations sought to build upon its history of dealing with the small arms issue in holding a major meeting in July, 2001 to discuss concrete actions the international community could take.

The Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects has been attributed various degrees of success and failure. In terms of success, 189 countries were able to agree on a Program of Action that urges governments to enact laws, regulations and administrative procedures to prevent the illicit trafficking in small arms and to make the illegal manufacture, possession, stockpiling and trade of these weapons a criminal offense. It was also decided that a review Conference is to be held no later than 2006 to examine progress in implementing the agreement, thereby ensuring that this would be the first step in what is expected to be a lengthy effort. The Conference has also been commended for placing a spotlight on the issue of small arms and providing an important platform for civil society and concerned governments to press for serious action.

However, the success of the Conference was limited from the beginning since it only set out to discuss the illegal aspects of the small arms trade. This focus has been criticized for ignoring the fact that most illicit weapons originate in the legal export market before being diverted. Moreover, the agreement that was reached is a non-binding voluntary declaration with no enforcement mechanism, thereby raising the question of how seriously it will be taken by its signatories. Unfortunately, the Conference's final document did not include provisions that would have regulated civilian gun ownership and restricted arms transfers to legitimate States.

This past year also saw efforts to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention. A protocol had been drawn up to enforce the 1972 Convention, which would require signatory states to declare all industrial facilities capable of manufacturing bio-weapons. The lack of full agreement to the protocol was another setback for the international cooperation that is so necessary to prevent terrorism. Combating the dangers of terrorist use of deadly organisms requires more credible international institutions of arms control than the present ones.

Mr. Chairman, the tragedy of 11 September must compel us to sharpen our sense of urgency to respond effectively to the dangers we face. Let us recall the words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who said during the recent debate on terrorism in the General Assembly:

"It is hard to imagine how the tragedy of 11 September could have been worse. Yet the truth is that a single attack involving a nuclear or biological weapon could have killed millions. While the world was unable to prevent the 11 September attacks, there is much we can do to help prevent future terrorist acts carried out with weapons of mass destruction. The greatest immediate danger arises from a non-state group -- or even an individual -- acquiring and using a nuclear, biological, or chemical weapon. Such a weapon could be delivered without the need for any missile or any other sophisticated delivery system."

The Holy See has frequently, in this Committee, urged implementation of the obligations all States hold under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, obligations reinforced by the International Court of Justice. That obligation was expressed succinctly in the 2000 Review of the NPT, in which all 187 signatories pledged "an unequivocal undertaking to the total elimination of nuclear weapons." We must now tackle the central problem of nuclear weapons; especially the mentality of those who possess them and claim that they are essential to security. Now is the time to dispel this claim and to declare that the continued possession of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is endangering all humanity and that they must be abolished.

With the Secretary-General, the Holy See calls to intensify efforts to ensure the universality, verification and full implementation of key treaties relating to weapons of mass destruction, including those outlawing chemical and biological weapons, and the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Special attention must be given the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the International Conference, postponed as a result of the 11 September attacks, must go ahead to ensure the entry into force of the Treaty.

Having signed the CTBT on 24 September 1996, the Holy See deposited the Instrument of Ratification on 18 July 2001. The Holy See, reiterating the firm conviction that "nuclear weapons are incompatible with the peace we seek for the Twenty-first Century," added: "The Holy See is convinced that, in the sphere of nuclear weapons, the banning of tests and the further development of these weapons, disarmament and non-proliferation are closely linked and must be achieved as quickly as possible under effective international controls." Today, the Holy See adds its voice to the appeal to the States whose ratification is necessary for the entry into force of the treaty.

The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Preparatory Commission has done commendable work in enabling the world community to have confidence that a CTBT will produce positive results. The Independent Commission on the verifiability of the CTBT provides assurance that the various scientific instruments and networks will be able to detect, locate and identify with a high probability any deviation from the demands of the Treaty.

The continued success of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) requires the entry into force of the CTBT. If the world is to stop the proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, then the flow of development

of such weapons must be extinguished at the source. A weakened NPT and an inoperable CTBT will force the world to continue wandering through a dangerous morass of tensions and recriminations. The security of all States will continue to be severely jeopardized.

Mr. Chairman, the present course – more arms and more poverty – is leading us to human disasters even greater than what we endured on 11 September. The basic requirements for the peace we seek is the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, the curbing of the arms trade, and the eradication of massive, endemic poverty. We have no choice if humanity is to survive.

This distressing time must teach us that violence and war are not inevitable. An unavoidable clash of civilizations is not our fate. War and mass violence usually result from deliberate political decisions. Rather than intervening in violent conflicts after they have erupted and then engaging in post-conflict peace-building, it is more humane and more efficient to prevent such violence in the first place by addressing its roots. This is the essence of a culture of peace approach.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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