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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA RIUNIONE ANNUALE DELL'ORGANIZZAZIONE PER LA SICUREZZA E LA COOPERAZIONE IN EUROPA (VARSAVIA, 9-19 SETTEMBRE 2002)

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Lunedì scorso, 9 settembre, si è aperta a Varsavia la riunione annuale dell'Organizzazione per la Sicurezza e la Cooperazione in Europa, per l'esame dell'attuazione degli impegni che i 55 Stati Partecipanti hanno assunto nella cosiddetta "dimensione umana" dell'OSCE.

Riportiamo di seguito l'intervento pronunciato, in tale data, da Mons. Ettore Balestrero, Capo della Delegazione della Santa Sede, durante la seduta plenaria:

• INTERVENTO DI MONS. ETTORE BALESTRERO

Mr. Chairman,

The delegation of the Holy See is grateful to the Polish Authorities for their hospitality and is confident that under the experienced leadership of the Portuguese Chairmanship the new format of the present OSCE 2002 human dimension implementation meeting will contribute to a more effective inclusion of its results in the political decisions of the next Ministerial Council.

We all know that this is the most significant annual meeting specifically focused on human rights of our Organisation. We are also well aware of the fact that in spite of our procedural and organizational efforts, the lack of real political determination would make our final recommendations just an "oasis" of good intentions in a "desert" of political agendas that are in fact differently oriented.

We are an Organisation which places human rights at the core of security, not in opposition to it, and we are called to keep alive the "flame of the torch" that we "lit" at Helsinki, some thirty years ago.

To maintain this "light" we should strive to implement the commitments assumed, and to act in a manner consistent with them, even when responding to the threat of terrorism.

1. In the past year we have heard a lot about terrorism. Without a functioning rule of law there is no possibility of

effectively addressing the scourge of terrorism. At the same time, if special measures are required, these should not be potential factors of change for the quality and nature of the democratic and judiciary systems.

In other words, it should be avoided the risk of undermining the very basis of democracy and the rule of law even with the reason of coming to its defence.

In this context, I wish to recall what the recent Berlin Declaration has also emphasized: "nationality or religion does not equate as such to terrorism". In Assisi, on January 24 last, religious leaders committed themselves to a "Decalogue for Peace", in which they also rejected and condemned "every recourse to violence and war in the name of God or of religion".

2. As we all know, religious freedom is a fundamental freedom. It adheres directly to the person and it is prior to any civil authority. The defence of this right limits the States and is an expression of their authentic democratic nature.

No civil law on religious communities may therefore be used to limit the activities, which are expressions of the religious freedom of those communities and of their individual members.

Besides, religious freedom is connected with freedom of conscience, which may be regarded, in a sense, as the root of all freedoms.

When religious convictions are freely chosen and lived in a coherent way, they constitute a resource, rather than a potential risk; a chance for each individual and for the entire society, rather than expressions of fanaticism or narrowness of mind. We all know that religious freedom remains an essential element for security and for the peaceful coexistence of peoples, a condition for any effective conflict prevention and a powerful tool for the construction of a lasting peace.

Religious freedom is, therefore, to be respected by all and guaranteed to everyone, even if a particular religion enjoys a special status in a country. This freedom applies also to non-citizens who temporarily reside on the territory of that same country.

Member States of the OSCE should therefore reject any pressure possibly exercised in the context of their jurisdiction by whatever religious confession, even if especially important on their territory, which might damage the expressions of religious freedom of other religious communities also present on that same territory. Those pressures would be, in fact, a lack of tolerance and could hamper the construction of an authentic peace.

Nowadays there are countries, whose representatives sit around this table, in which local communities of the Catholic Church lack the necessary local clergy and therefore need the cooperation of foreign personnel in order to exercise effectively their religious freedom. Some of these communities and their members are treated in an arbitrary manner, or a manner which, at times, verges on discrimination as regards the concession of visa for the above mentioned non-resident personnel.

There are countries here represented where local communities of the Catholic Church are also experiencing difficulties in establishing and maintaining freely accessible places of worship, as well as in organizing themselves according to their hierarchical structure. Since these limitations still occur, it means that there are still countries where the 1989 Vienna Concluding Document, which rejects those same limitations, is not always implemented.

Mr. Chairman,

3. A specific portion of our meeting will be devoted to the scourge of trafficking in human persons.

The Holy See highly appreciates and supports the attention that now and in the coming months – also in other fora – will be given to this reality, which has been defined as the slavery of the 21st century.

Within the international community this is indeed a burning issue. Nonetheless it is necessary for us all to confront the uncomfortable fact that so far States have not succeeded in eliminating this trade for profit. This makes it especially important not to give in to any demagoguery which would hamper the determination of new remedies and the implementation of the existing ones.

Numerous Catholic Organizations are actively involved in countering this scourge with programs of assistance and rehabilitation, with health centres and with legal and psychological assistance, with temporary accommodations, with programs of job education and with support in finding decent employment.

4. As we know, the question of trafficking must always be taken into consideration together with that of migration, which today is becoming an ever more sensitive issue for many countries.

Migration is to be seen in the context of globalisation, which – in conjunction with poverty – inevitably stimulates migration and will probably do so all the more.

Today, migration should be still regarded in terms of opportunity: opportunity for the migrant, opportunity for the host country.

In general terms, we should emphasize that the regulation of migration with projects respectful of the genuine good of both migrants and the host population would benefit all parties concerned. The human rights and fundamental freedoms of all parties involved should obviously be guaranteed, as well as the international protection of those who are entitled to receive it. Furthermore, it could be opportune to take into account economic and social factors, as well as the specific cultural identity of the host population and the need for peaceful coexistence in its territory.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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