SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO
HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 0268

Giovedì 22.05.2003

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA SECONDA SESSIONE DEL FORUM PERMANENTE DELL'O.N.U. SULLE PROBLEMATICHE DELLE POPOLAZIONI INDIGENE

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA SECONDA SESSIONE DEL FORUM PERMANENTE DELL'O.N.U. SULLE PROBLEMATICHE DELLE POPOLAZIONI INDIGENE

Riportiamo di seguito l'intervento pronunciato ieri dall'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, l'Arcivescovo S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, davanti alla seconda sessione del Forum permanente dell'O.N.U. sulle problematiche delle popolazioni indigene, in corso a New York:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Mr. Chairman,

As the United Nations celebrates the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People, the Holy See welcomes the decision of the Permanent Forum to choose "Indigenous Children and Youth" as the theme for its Second Session. The establishment of this Permanent Forum, which held its historic first session in May 2002, has put this important topic in its rightful place on the international agenda. My delegation is confident that the debate and deliberations on this topic will help strengthen the bonds of international solidarity in protecting the identity and rights of indigenous people.

Mr. Chairman,

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the Holy See is a party, is the first international human rights treaty to recognize indigenous children as a group of rights-holders, and specifically identifies indigenous people as a group which suffers from discrimination in relation to most of the rights enshrined within. Article 30 of the Convention reaffirms in particular the right of indigenous people to enjoy their own culture, stating that an indigenous child "shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language". Similarly, articles 17 and 29 explicitly refer to the rights of all children to education and information. The general principles of the Convention enjoin, inter alia, non-discrimination (art. 2), the best interests of the child (art. 3), and the right to life, survival and development (art. 6).

Despite various international commitments, children remain especially vulnerable to violations of the right to education, and for indigenous children and youth this challenge is compounded by racism, xenophobia and related intolerances that continue to affect them on the basis of their own cultural specificities and uniqueness. Yet, the right to education forms the foundation for the enjoyment of many other human rights and is a necessary component for achieving the Millennium Development Goals such as poverty alleviation. In fact, the Dakar Framework for Action states that "Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries".

Mr. Chairman,

The right to education concerns not only matters of access, but also of ensuring content which can empower indigenous children for their future. In this regard, the international community should recognize and respect the primary responsibility of the indigenous family as the basic unit of their own society to educate their children from infancy to adolescence, in their own language and according to their own cultures and values, based on effective indigenous pedagogies. Access to education should comprise, wherever appropriate, alternative learning structures, expanded vocational training and innovative methods aimed at increasing practical and professional skills of indigenous youth.

For every indigenous child, an education based on core spiritual, moral and ethical values is an indispensable tool for his or her own integral development. In the absence of these, indigenous children risk losing the rich diversity of their traditions in the midst of an all-encompassing globalized culture. On their part, the indigenous people must test and reject false values that would tarnish a truly human way of life, and embrace only noble and befitting values that would help them to mold a future in their own distinctive way, according to their own indigenous heritage. In seeking to protect the right to education of indigenous children and youth, the international community can effectively provide support for the efforts of indigenous communities to defend their heritage and identity.

Mr. Chairman,

Children and young people are "precious members of the human family, for they embody its hopes, its expectations and its potential" *(Message of Pope John Paul II for the World Day of Peace 1996, No. 9)*. The challenge facing individuals and organizations, indeed the entire international community, is to ensure that indigenous children and youth are not robbed of their present and their future, but are given the possibility of growing up in peace, happiness and freedom. Then, they too will become peacemakers, builders of a promising world of fraternity, harmony and solidarity.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[00812-02.02] [Original text: English]