

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 113a SESSIONE DEL COMITATO DEI MINISTRI DEL CONSIGLIO D'EUROPA

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Nei giorni 5 e 6 novembre 2003, si è tenuta a Chişinău (Moldova), la 113a Sessione del Comitato dei Ministri del Consiglio d'Europa. La Santa Sede vi è stata rappresentata da S.E. Mons. Jean Claude Périsset, Nunzio Apostolico in Moldova, che ha pronunciato l'intervento che pubblichiamo di seguito:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. JEAN CLAUDE PÉRISSET

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to express through you the gratitude of the Holy See to the Committee of Ministers for the invitation to attend its 113th Session. We also wish to congratulate the Moldovan Authorities on the preparation and arrangements for this session, and record our acknowledgment of the good will of the Moldovan chairmanship.

The Holy See shares the conviction that cooperation between the European Institutions remains a high priority for the Council of Europe, as enlargement brings the European Union into still greater relief within the pan-European architecture. Pope John Paul II has described the role of the European Institutions "in the work of creating a new face for the continent" as "in many ways decisive" (*Ecclesia in Europa* [EIE], 113), while that of the Council of Europe is specifically "to build a Europe of freedom and solidarity" (idem).

It is the hope of the Holy See that the consolidation of efficacious cooperation will recognise and enhance the particular competence and unique expertise already acquired by the Council of Europe. For more than half a century it has been engaged in consistent and effective efforts in key areas which touch the lives of countless Europeans. The complimentary character of the roles and competences of both Council and Union will prove to be in the interests of the common good.

The prospect of a constitutional Treaty for the European Union promises further opportunities for institutional cooperation between the Churches, Ecclesial Communities and other religious organizations and the European Institutions. Such "healthy cooperation" (EIE, 114) will consolidate the already significant contribution which the

Churches have made and are making to the building of Europe. Such recognition of the public role to be played by religious institutions is welcomed, as is that of the importance which must surely be given to the religious dimension in guaranteeing the secure and peaceful development of society.

The Holy See shares the belief, often voiced at the Council, that culture plays a indispensable role in such efforts and possesses even greater potential to do so. Thus, we trust that enhanced cooperation between the Institutions will be focussed particularly in this area. It is also our conviction that the religious dimension and heritage, in all their splendid diversity, are most enriching, as they clearly form an integral part of a multitude of identities, which can only be successfully integrated within Europe through being valued and celebrated. At the same time, it will be to the enduring advantage of all Europeans if due recognition is given to the unique and undisputable contribution of Christianity to European civilization. This will also greatly assist Europe in achieving "a proper ordering of society... rooted in authentic ethical and civil values" (idem).

The Holy See applauds the efforts being made at many levels and within the Council of Europe itself to confront what is rightly described as one of the most shameful scourges of our age, that modern slavery which is trafficking in human beings, and in young women and girls in particular. Initiatives at every level to combat such criminality, which exploits the most vulnerable and subverts their very humanity, command our support.

To conclude, Mr Chairman, may I express the very best wishes of this Delegation for the forthcoming Dutch chairmanship, to which we offer the assurance of our support and collaboration. I can assure the Committee of Ministers that the longstanding commitment of the Holy See to the principles, aims and values of the Council of Europe will not falter, and we look forward to the Third Summit and to the important decisions to be taken then for the future benefit of all Europeans.

Thank you Mr Chairman.

[01737-02.02] [Original text: English]
