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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 14a CONFERENZA DEI MINISTRI EUROPEI RESPONSABILI DEI POTERI LOCALI E REGIONALI

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Nei giorni 24 e 25 febbraio 2005 si è tenuta a Budapest, nell'ambito delle attività del Consiglio d'Europa, la 14a Conferenza dei Ministri europei responsabili dei Poteri Locali e Regionali.

Pubblichiamo di seguito il testo dell'intervento di S.E. Mons. Juliusz Janusz, Nunzio Apostolico in Ungheria, Capo della Delegazione della Santa Sede:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. JULIUSZ JANUSZ

Mr President,

The Delegation of the Holy See first wishes to thank the Government of Hungary for the cordial reception given us on the occasion of the 14th Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional and Local Government, and for the flawless organization of this Meeting.

Given its particular nature, the Holy See does not wish to enter into the details of specific plans for implementing regional autonomy. The Delegation would like, however, to make its own contribution by recalling certain values which it believes should be incorporated when defining priorities on politics regarding the Government at the Local and Regional levels.

Any implementation of regional autonomy needs to take into account the *common good*, namely, the good of all people and of the whole person. The reason that public administration exists, not only on a national but also on a local and regional level, is *to serve the human being* at every level of a State in order to build a more free and responsible society.

To attain this *common good* the Delegation of the Holy See endorses the essential objective of "delivering good local and regional governance" to which member States are willing to commit themselves during this Conference. Good local and regional governance is indeed the *conditio sine qua non* for local and regional

authorities to faithfully keep to their mission of serving the common good of the communities.

This local and regional governance, in order to be good, requires a *democratic* form of government, which is defined first of all by the assignment of powers and functions on the part of the people, exercised in their name, in their regard and on their behalf. As democratic, local and regional governments should promote the *participation* in public life of all people living within the community, without neglecting the stranger among them. A shared participation calls for work in areas of education, information and communication. Adequate information is, in fact, among the principal instruments of democratic participation.

Further, good governance at a local and regional level implies respect for *the principle of subsidiarity*. A community of a higher instance should not interfere in the internal life of a community of a lower one, depriving the latter of its functions, but rather should support it in case of need and help to coordinate its activity with the activities of the rest of society, always with a view to the common good. The needs of the community are best understood and satisfied by people who are close to them and who act as neighbours to those in need.

However, subsidiarity does not exclude the necessity of *solidarity* of local and regional authorities among themselves and with the central authorities, always in order to contribute effectively to the common good. Local and regional autonomy should not be viewed simply as a political, economic and cultural option, but should be seen in a context of solidarity, without overlooking the broader interests and the possible needs of less influential sectors of the society. In the first place, the recognition of and respect for human rights, based on human dignity and acknowledged as a principle which limits public authority, is one of the foundations of European culture and is safeguarded in the Council of Europe by the European Convention on Human Rights, a shared patrimony of the Member States.

Finally, a good government is that government in which political authorities do not forget or underestimate the *moral dimension* of political representation. This consists in the commitment to share fully in the destiny of the people and to seek solutions to social problems. In this perspective, responsible authority also means an authority exercised by persons who are able to accept the common good and not prestige or the gaining of personal advantages as the true goal of their work. Indeed, political corruption causes a growing distrust with respect to public institutions, bringing about a progressive disaffection in the citizens with regard to politics and its representatives, with a resulting weakening of institutions. At any level - national, regional, local - political power shall be put into practice as a service to the dignity and rights of the human person.

Thank you, Mr President.

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