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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 93° CONFERENZA INTERNAZIONALE DEL LAVORO

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Dal 31 maggio al 16 giugno si svolge a Ginevra la 93° sessione della Conferenza Generale del Lavoro, alla quale partecipa una Delegazione di Osservazione della Santa Sede, guidata dall'Osservatore Permanente presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite ed Istituzioni Specializzate a Ginevra, S.E. Mons. Silvano M. Tomasi, C.S..

Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento da lui pronunciato nel pomeriggio del 7 giugno 2005:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. SILVANO M. TOMASI

Mr. President,

1. The future that challenges and confronts the international community and individual countries is marked by an increasing awareness that only together we can make progress and find the right path toward a truly human life. The rapid pace of change may give rise to doubt and to the temptation of isolation and momentarily derail the move forward. But the process of globalization continues: making it inclusive and removing the obstacles that obstructs its beneficial impact for all is the commitment that emerges from this 93rd International Labour Conference.

Clearly the spirit of solidarity and of enterprise that flows from the unique tripartite collaboration of states, workers and employers shows a model of interdependence that can enrich other international organizations in this moment of search for reforms devoted to a more effective service to the whole human family.

2. The road towards a decent work for a decent life in a world where the globalization of solidarity is an active agenda starts indeed with young women and men and the promotion of their employment.

There is a sense of urgency to find a response to the fact that globally less than half of the youth available for work had jobs in 2004 and that an estimated 59 million young people aged 15 to 18 years are in hazardous forms of work.

Already John Paul II had asked during his visit to the ILO in 1982: can we tolerate a situation in which many young people may find themselves without any prospect of one day getting a job and which, at the very least, could leave them with lifelong scars? (John Paul II, Address to the International Labour Organization, 15 June 1982, n.12). In developing countries, lack of innovative technologies makes it difficult to translate research findings into productive initiatives. The priority to be given to education and formation, especially in a knowledge-based economy, is evident. At the same time, youth unemployment should be contextualized and the whole economic structure of developing countries needs to be sustained in its evolution and enabled to compete fairly in the world market.

Decent jobs for young people have a critical pay off. Their creativity supported by an adequate technical culture and a sound sense of responsibility can make up for their limited experience and even open additional jobs through the micro-enterprises they may launch with the granting of appropriate credit. The communities, where young people are not employed, lose hope. The creative energy of the young, not channeled toward productive goals, is dispersed and wasted. In fact, the risk is unfortunately real that lack of jobs and employment opportunities push the young into the destructive underworld of drugs, violence, criminal activities and even terrorism.

Speaking on May 1, 2005, to many workers attending his first Sunday audience, the new Holy Father Benedict XVI underlined how solidarity, justice and peace should be "the pillars on which to build the unity of the human family". He called on workers to witness in contemporary society the "Gospel of work". "I hope," he added, "that work will be available, especially for young people, and that working conditions may be ever more respectful of the dignity of the human person."

3. The creation of decent work for all in a sustainable world has been a long-standing common base for a fruitful dialogue between the ILO and the social doctrine of the Church. It is the dignity of every human person that requires access to work in condition of personal security, health, fair remuneration, a safe environment. Work is a right and the expression of human dignity. My Delegation, therefore, sees unemployment as a "real social disaster" and supports international organizations, employers, labour unions and governments to join forces, strengthen juridical norms of protection, promote the implementation of existing conventions. In such convergence of forces it is particularly significant to recall that the last official audience scheduled by the late Pope John Paul II, whose official visit to ILO and masterful encyclical on human work, *Laborem Exercens*, remain a lasting contribution, had been for the ILO Director General. And much appreciated has been the presence of the Director General at the funeral of John Paul II and at the inauguration of Benedict XVI's ministry. There is a shared vision that work is the motor for development and poverty elimination, for unlocking the hidden resources of nature, for personal and professional fulfillment and family support, for social participation in the wellbeing of society.

4. As a popular saying goes, "Think globally, act locally," fundamental principles and strategic objectives need to be enfolded in the daily existence of people to make a difference. In the word of the Director General's Report, a common effort is demanded "to maintain and increase this advocacy of a decent work perspective in economic and social policies locally, nationally and internationally," and to implement decent work country programs so as to move in this positive direction. However, a more determined outreach to the most vulnerable categories of workers is called for. Coherent action against forced labour, at the national level and in a collaborative mode with the international community can eradicate this most *indecent* work which should have no place in the modern world. The estimates provided for the first time at this Conference are their own commentary: Today, at least 12.3 million people are victims of forced labour worldwide. Of these, 9.8 million are exploited by private agents, including more than 2.4 million in forced labour as a result of human trafficking, a 32 billion dollar global business.

Another 2.5 million are forced to work by the State or by rebel military groups. (International Labour Office, *A global alliance against forced labour*, Report I (B) International Labour Conference, 93rd Session 2005, p. 10). Obviously the human person is treated as an instrument of production, his or her freedom and dignity violated, the rights that flow from work stifled. When work is isolated from the broader context of human rights, the worst forms of exploitation take over.

5. An important sign of the continued dynamism of the ILO is its persevering commitment to focus on forced labour as well as on all segments of the world of work that are most emarginated. The workers of the sea have not been forgotten.. For fishermen, a much needed instrument that holds the potential for improving the life of 90% of these most forgotten people, is the convention hopefully to be approved and opened for ratification at this Conference. It is difficult, and therefore a greater achievement, to produce a convention that will take into consideration in a balanced way very different situations that go from the small fisher that fishes with a net from his wooden boat for sustenance to the commercial fishing vessels some so sophisticated to be a processing factory on the waves of the sea. Fishing is a complex and also dangerous profession with high occupational accidents, deaths and injuries. The proposed convention: "Work in the fishing sector", and its Recommendations, can make all kind of professional fishing safer and a decent workplace.

6. For the first time, an integrated approach and framework is proposed for the protection of workers against injuries and sickness related to their work. The combination of norms, clear lines of responsibility and mechanism for compliance should strengthen prevention and increase the wellbeing of workers and their productivity. It is a dramatic realization to read that fatal and non-fatal accidents are estimated at 270 million and that some 160 million workers suffer from work-related diseases (International Labour Organization, *Promotional framework for occupational safety and health*, 93rd Session 2005, p.3) An instrument dealing with renewed commitment with occupational safety and health seems really timely and opportune.

7. Mr. President, new questions and problems are always arising as the economy, technological advances and the globalized organization of society evolve.

Work remains central in building up the future. But protagonist of his work is the human person and safeguarding his dignity and centrality in all new realities is the best guarantee for a more just and peaceful world.

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