



BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 50MA SESSIONE DELLA COMMISSIONE SULLO STATO DELLE DONNE DEL CONSIGLIO ECONOMICO E SOCIALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento pronunciato ieri dalla Delegazione della Santa Sede alla 50ma Sessione della Commissione sullo stato delle donne del Consiglio Economico e Sociale delle Nazioni Unite sul punto 3: Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitle "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century":

• INTERVENTO DELLA DELEGAZIONE DELLA SANTA SEDE

Madam Chair,

On the occasion of the 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, my delegation takes the floor to acknowledge the progress made in favour of women during these important debates and deliberations, as well as the setbacks in certain spheres.

Looking back for a moment, the Commission may be pleased with the growing profile that women's issues have on the world political stage. This was eloquently illustrated in the recent World Summit Outcome Document, in which leaders expressed their conviction that "progress for women is progress for all". Among other things, the World Summit rightly underlined the interdependence of development, peace and security and human rights. Further, it emphasized that, for them to have a positive impact upon poorer and more vulnerable women in particular, they have still to be drawn together through wise political action, to the benefit of all the world's peoples.

We should not lose sight of the purpose of this Commission, which is to prepare recommendations and reports to the ECOSOC on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields, with a view to achieving equal rights of men and women and promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. The UN Charter rightly pledges to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

Therefore, attempts to replace present inequalities must be done in a timely and bold manner as well as with great care. Ideally, policies should be designed that restore balance and fairness to social and political structures in such a way that their very success persuades all people to work towards the true advancement of women. All those who want to favour the progress of women must pursue it by the moral strength of their arguments. They will never do so, if they insist on linking women's freedom, dignity and equality to unsound policies that have handicapped women's true progress in recent times.

Regarding the themes of development and peace, under discussion in this review, evident challenges to women and girls remain, especially in countries afflicted by armed conflict, poverty or both.

In this context, my delegation notes that the recently completed Year of Microcredit drew attention to the notable success of microfinance, something which has had a particularly positive impact due in great part to women entrepreneurs in developing countries. This is a phenomenon which has had the support of local Catholic Churches for many years, through parallel schemes and informal small loans to poor people whose needs were not met by the financial institutions. It is most encouraging to see poor women's patience, honesty and hard work rewarded in this way in many places, and it is to be encouraged by attention to the reform of structures that will in turn assist the spread and continued success of new initiatives in this field.

There is little doubt that by 2050 we will have witnessed the greying of the world's population in a way hitherto unknown in recorded human history. Women still commonly live longer than men, but elderly women are sometimes shamefully overlooked by policy makers and agencies that are created to look after women's concerns. It would be well therefore to reconsider policies directed at elderly women, who have oftentimes cared for others in their adulthood, and who in justice should receive proper support in their turn.

Turning to migrants, in general, they represent 2.9 per cent of world population, some 185-192 million people, nearly half of whom are female. It often happens that women migrants become the principal source of income for their family. The most common employment opportunities for women, other than domestic work, consist in helping the elderly, caring for the sick and working in the hotel sector. These, too, are areas where just treatment must be assured for migrant women out of respect for their femininity in recognition of their equal rights.

On a related matter, trafficking in human beings has a particularly negative impact on women. In some cases there are women and girls who are exploited almost like slaves in their work, and not infrequently in the sex industry. The culture which encourages the systematic exploitation of sexuality is as pervasive as it is unhealthy for society and must be addressed by more than fine words.

Perhaps we should add here that, in armed conflicts, women and girls are also victims of systematic rape for political purposes. Those who permit, encourage or command such acts merit just punishment along with the immediate perpetrators of such crimes, while the protection of women must be honoured in accordance with Article 27 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as its Additional Protocols I and II.

The Holy See again condemns vigorously the sexual violence that frequently has women and girls for its object and encourages the passing of laws that will effectively defend them from such violence. Nor can we fail, in the name of the respect due to the human person, to condemn the widespread culture which encourages the systematic exploitation of sexuality and corrupts even very young girls into letting their bodies be used for profit in a world-wide \$ 3 billion industry.

The women's movement has been described as "the great process of women's liberation". This journey has been a difficult and complicated one and, at times, not without its share of mistakes. But it has been substantially a positive one, even if it is still unfinished, as all people of good will strive to have women acknowledged, respected, and appreciated in their own special dignity.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[00332-01.01] [Testo originale: Inglese]
