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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 95ma SESSIONE DELLA CONFERENZA INTERNAZIONALE DEL LAVORO (GINEVRA, 31 MAGGIO-16 GIUGNO 2006)

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E' in corso a Ginevra, dal 31 maggio al 16 giugno 2006, la 95ma sessione della Conferenza Internazionale del Lavoro, che ha come tematica centrale la promozione del lavoro decente per tutti, cioè il lavoro debitamente rimunerato e svolto in modo rispettoso della dignità dei lavoratori.

Mercoledì 8 giugno, l'Osservatore Permanente presso l'Organizzazione Internazionale del Lavoro, S.E. Mons. Silvano Tomasi, C.S., ha pronunciato l'intervento che pubblichiamo di seguito:

● INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. SILVANO TOMASI

Mr. President,

1. The International Community has committed itself in a solemn way to promote "full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people."1 The strategic role of work in combating poverty and the quality of work, within its social context, bear directly on the dignity of the human person even before they serve as indispensable tools of development. The Delegation of the Holy See notices with satisfaction that decent work, not only as a notion, but as a strategic agenda, is now at the forefront of any discussion on eradicating poverty and that a convergence of efforts is underway for its implementation. The task, however, is far off from reaching its target. The liberalisation of finance and trade and the ongoing process of globalization have produced much wealth, but plenty of evidence shows growing disparities among and within countries in reaping the benefits of this increased wealth. If the measure of decent work is adopted, it becomes clear that too many people remain excluded from enjoying it because they are indecently exploited or are altogether out of work. People not sufficiently qualified to board the globalisation train or whose capacity and talents are utilised to propel forward the global economy without their sharing in the accruing benefits, are in the tens of millions: undocumented migrants working in agriculture, in manufacturing, in domestic service; women in textile industry working in unhealthy conditions and with miserable salaries; workers labelled by their race, cast or religion that are relegated to the marginal jobs of society without a chance for upward mobility; exploited workers in export processing zones and all over the world, workers being paid less and less who must work

more and more to earn a decent salary.

A case can be made, it has been observed, that inequality and poverty are the overriding moral issue of the 21st century. Thus a globalisation that fosters economic growth without equity blocks access to decent work and calls into question the current functioning of the international structures created to facilitate the flow of ideas, capital, technology, goods and people for the common good.

2. The importance of work is evident above all in the formation of a person's humanity. Not consumption, but the capacity to create new things, situations, expressions, marks the vitality of a person, her/his self-expression. The personal imprint given through work brings about satisfaction and the will to grow, to give and contribute in a positive way to social coexistence. If work is lacking or is indecent, it is the person that is stifled and pushed into a crisis and a person in crisis is easily tempted by anti-social and destructive behaviour. From the primacy of the ethical value of human labour follows "a logical sequence of priorities: of the person over work, of work over capital, of the universal destination of goods over the exclusive right to private ownership of the means of production",2 in a word, of the human being over enterprises, increased stock market value, material possessions. The changed perspective that decent work for all entails, calls for a renewed emphasis on the dignity of every person and on common good by placing them atthe centre of all labour activities and policies.

3. Mr. President,

The initiatives of solidarity undertaken to promote the implementation of the Decent Work Agenda at the local level are effective forms of cooperation that give credibility to this Agenda. In past decades, the ILO has developed a rich body of labour standards; they remain the main road through which the international community can achieve a progressive improvement of the quality of work and of the rights of workers. At the same time, this unique dimension of ILO requires today a convergence of efforts with other international agencies and a coherence of plans and actions so that the complexity of the economy and social relations may not frustrate or delay the global goal of decent work.

4. Two steps taken in this context add an encouraging dimension to the concrete implementation of decent work objectives. The first concerns the 1999 Worst Forms of Children Labour Convention (n.182) and the recent good news that for the first time the number of children bound to work in the world has been reduced by 11% between 2000 and 2004 passing from 248 to 218 millions. The prospect that children may be taken out of agricultural work or quarrying, that they may not be trafficked for forced prostitution, that they may be able to go to school and grow up with hope, should redouble the determination of governments, employers, unions, the civil society to aim at a total elimination of child labour. The second step regards the hopefully soon to be adopted Convention and Recommendation on a Framework for Occupational Safety and Health. A safe and healthy working environment is an integral component of decent work, especially if we keep in mind that 270 million work accidents are registered every year and 160 million people suffer of illnesses related to work and accidents and illnesses causing the death of about 5000 workers daily.3 The patient development of labour standards, when the political will and the collaboration of all segments of society are present, becomes an effective tool that gives results and changes the world of work for the better.

5. Mr. President,

In conclusion, the fast-evolving process of globalisation impacts directly on the organisation of production and of work and continues to demand adaptation and imagination to sustain decent work. But work will be really decent if, as Pope Benedict XVI has reminded workers on the occasion of last May 1st, the human person "is subject and protagonist of work." In fact, work is of primary importance for any woman and man's "fulfilment and the development of society, and this is why it is necessary that it always be organised and developed in full respect of human dignity and at the service of the common good."4

1United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 60/1 : 2005 World Summit Outcome, n. 47.2Cfr. John Paul II,

Laborem Exercens (The Human person and work, Rome, 1981, nn. 12-20.3Cfr. Bureau international du Travail. Conférence internationale du Travail, 93 session, 2005. Rapport IV (I) Cadre promotionnel pour la sécurité et la santé au travail, p.1.4Cfr. Benedict XVI's Homily of March 19 in *L'Osservatore Romano*. March 20-21, 2006, p.7.[00903-02.02] [Original text: English][B0307-XX.01]