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LE LETTERE CREDENZIALI DEGLI AMBASCIATORI DI: DANIMARCA, KYRGYZSTAN, MOZAMBICO, UGANDA, SIRIA, LESOTHO

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- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI DANIMARCA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. LARS MØLLER
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI KYRGYZSTAN PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. MARATBEK SALIEVIC BAKIEV
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL MOZAMBICO PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. CARLOS DOS SANTOS
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI UGANDA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, LA PRINCIPESSA ELIZABETH BAGAYA
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI SIRIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. MAKRAM OBEID
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Alle ore 12.30 di questa mattina, nella Sala del Concistoro, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI ha ricevuto in Udienza, in occasione della presentazione delle Lettere Credenziali, le Loro Eccellenze i Signori Ambasciatori di: Danimarca, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambico, Uganda, Siria e Lesotho.

Di seguito pubblichiamo i discorsi consegnati dal Papa agli Ambasciatori degli Stati sopra elencati, nonché i cenni biografici essenziali di ciascuno:

- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI DANIMARCA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL

SIG. LARS MØLLER

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to receive you and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador and Minister Plenipotentiary of Denmark to the Holy See. I am grateful for the message of greetings which you have brought from Queen Margrethe II. I recall with pleasure my meeting with Her Majesty last spring and I ask you kindly to convey to her my own warm greeting, together with my prayerful good wishes for the happiness and prosperity of the Danish people.

In this, the twenty-fifth year since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Denmark, I wish to express the Holy See's esteem for your country's efforts to promote an effective solidarity with poorer nations by supporting integral development and by working to alleviate the tragic situation of poverty, violence, hunger and disease which weighs upon so much of the human family. Denmark has been in the forefront of international efforts to implement the Millennium Development Goals and has generously contributed to the establishment of mechanisms for security and peacebuilding in areas of the world scarred by armed conflicts. These praiseworthy initiatives have been inspired by a sober recognition that global problems require global solutions. Coordination between national governments, the various institutions and agencies of the international community, and the many regional and local bodies committed to strengthening the social fabric, represent a sure path to increased respect for fundamental human rights and the promotion of justice and peace at every level.

I am grateful for your words of appreciation for the Holy See's presence and contribution within the international community. This service to peace is grounded in a firm conviction, inspired by faith, of the unity of the human family and the God-given dignity and rights of each person. Peace, in the words of the prophet Isaiah (32:17), is the fruit of justice, but it is also the fruit of love, which surpasses what justice alone can ensure (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 78). In her proclamation of the Gospel and her service of charity, the Church wishes to cooperate with all men and women of good will in building a global community in which hatred and intolerance, injustice and violence will give way to mutual understanding, reconciliation and generous cooperation in the pursuit of the common good. Only such cooperation, capable of transcending national, ethnic and religious boundaries, can ultimately prevail against the many contemporary threats to peace, including the scourge of international terrorism and the ideologies which inspire it.

As the Danish people confront complex political and ethical issues which will determine the future of your society, the nation's rich heritage of Christian faith can serve as a source of wisdom and inspiration in the demanding task of respecting Denmark's distinct identity and cultural heritage, while addressing the challenges of the present time. A vigorous public life benefits from the contribution of believers and a creative dialogue with the nation's religious tradition and values, since a healthy democracy requires a solid ethical foundation and respect for "the moral structure of freedom" (cf. *Ecclesia in Europa*, 98). For her part, the Church is ready "to contribute to the purification of reason and reawaken those moral forces without which just structures are neither set in place nor prove effective in the long run" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 29). I assure you that Denmark's Catholic community, though small in number, desires to play its part, in cooperation with other Christian believers, in this work of discernment and the elaboration of wise and far-sighted social policies. This is especially so with regard to the fundamental role and mission of the family founded upon marriage, the education of children, respect for God's gift of life from conception to natural death, and the responsible stewardship of the environment.

Mr Ambassador, as you begin your mission, I offer my best wishes for the work you will undertake in the service of your nation, and I assure you of the constant readiness of the offices of the Roman Curia to assist you in the fulfilment of your responsibilities. I am confident that your representation will help to consolidate the good relations existing between the Holy See and Denmark. Upon you and your family, and upon all the beloved Danish people, I cordially invoke God's blessings of joy and peace.

S.E. il Sig. Lars MøllerAmbasciatore di Danimarca presso la Santa Sede

E' nato a Copenhagen il 17 settembre 1943, è sposato ed ha due figli.

Si è laureato in Scienze Politiche ed Economiche (1967, Università di Copenhagen).

Ha intrapreso la carriera diplomatica nel 1967, ricoprendo, tra gli altri, i seguenti incarichi:

in servizio presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1967-1972 e 1975-1978); Segretario di Ambasciata presso le Comunità Europee a Bruxelles (1972); Capo di Gabinetto del Membro danese della Commissione delle Comunità Europee (1973-1975); Capo Dipartimento presso l'Ufficio per l'Energia e la Politica Industriale Internazionale (1978-1985); Ministro di Ambasciata negli Stati Uniti d'America (1985-1988); Ambasciatore in Kuwait, Bahrein e Qatar (1988-1991); Segretario Generale della Conferenza promossa dalle Nazioni Unite sullo Sviluppo Industriale Ecologicamente Sostenibile (1991); Ambasciatore in Lituania (1991-1997); Ambasciatore incaricato della Presidenza danese per il Consiglio degli Stati del Mar Baltico (1997-1998); Ambasciatore incaricato delle relazioni con le Repubbliche dell'Asia centrale (1998-2001); Ambasciatore incaricato dei negoziati internazionali sullo Sviluppo Sostenibile e Ambiente (2001-2003).

È Ambasciatore in Svizzera, ove risiede.

Parla l'inglese e il tedesco.

[01834-02.02] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI KYRGYZSTAN PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. MARATBEK SALIEVIC BAKIEV

Mr Ambassador,

It is with pleasure that I welcome you to the Vatican today and accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kyrgyz Republic to the Holy See. On this significant occasion I would ask you kindly to convey my cordial greetings to His Excellency President Kurmanbek Bakiyev and the people of your country. Assure them of my gratitude for their good wishes and of my prayers for the nation's peace and well-being.

The Church's diplomatic relations form a part of her mission of service to the international community. Her engagement with civil society is anchored in the conviction that the task of building a more just world must acknowledge and consider man's supernatural vocation. The Holy See strives therefore to promote an understanding of the human person who "receives from God his essential dignity and with it the capacity to transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness" (*Centesimus Annus*, 38). From this understanding the Church assists the vast array of cultures and nations that constitute our world to articulate and protect the universal values which safeguard the dignity of every person and serve the common good.

The extraordinary natural beauty of Kyrgyzstan is a blessing for your nation. Such dramatic evidence of the hand of the Creator gladdens the hearts of your people and helps them lift their thoughts towards the Almighty. Indeed, the people of Kyrgyzstan know well the importance of religious freedom and understand that if the spiritual dimension of persons is repressed or even denied, the soul of a nation is crushed. During the tragic epoch of intimidation in Central Asian history, while the supremacy of force endured, religious believers in your country nurtured a hope for freedom and justice, a future in which the supremacy of truth about the human person and the purpose of society would prevail. Today, that hope is experienced in a variety of ways including the tolerance demonstrated between religious and ethnic communities, the respect for the role of the family at the heart of your society, and the flourishing of your nation's fine arts. Such traits and values, which have in fact long adorned your history, assume a heightened importance of regional significance when we consider Kyrgyzstan's unique geographical position as a cultural crossroads.

As the Kyrgyz Republic continues to forge its national identity, it must be borne in mind that the important component of economic development contains a moral aspect, of crucial importance to the well-being and peaceful progress of a nation. It is here that the demand for justice is satisfied (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 10).

The right to meaningful work and an acceptable standard of living, the assurance of a fair distribution of goods and wealth, and the responsible use of natural resources all depend upon a concept of growth which is not limited to merely satisfying material necessities. Instead, such a notion must also highlight the dignity of every human person – the proper subject of all progress – and thereby enhance the common good of all humanity.

The legitimate aspirations of economic development are intrinsically linked to the principles and practices which favour the civic stability necessary for prosperity. Your country has already taken some steps towards protecting the fundamental rights of citizens and promoting democratic practices. Responsible and transparent governance free of interference, the maintenance of law and order, freedom of the press, and public participation in the civic institutions committed to the genuine development of the nation, all have their particular role in contributing to a culture of peace and collaboration. I encourage your government in its efforts to ensure that this process does not stall but indeed is strengthened.

Mr Ambassador, the members of the Catholic Church in your country are very few. Enjoying friendly relations with the Muslim and Orthodox communities, they are eager to reach out impartially to all peoples of Kyrgyzstan. Already their charitable activity extends from University teaching to prison visiting and to caring for the handicapped. This forms part of the Church's commitment to practical and concrete love for every human being and in a special way for the poor. In providing these services she desires neither power nor privilege, but only the freedom to express her belief in the "unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbour" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 16) through works of goodness, justice and peace. I am confident that as new social and spiritual needs arise in your land the Catholic community will respond generously and wisely.

Your Excellency, as you enter the diplomatic community accredited to the Holy See, I assure you of the willing assistance of the various offices and agencies of the Roman Curia. You have kindly noted that the relations existing between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Holy See are friendly and based on mutual respect and cooperation. May your mission serve to strengthen these bonds of understanding. With my sincere good wishes, I invoke upon you, your family and all your fellow citizens the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. il Sig. Maratbek Salievic Bakiev **Ambasciatore di Kyrgyzstan presso la Santa Sede**

È nato a Jalal-Abad il 26 ottobre 1963.

È sposato ed ha quattro figli.

Si è laureato in Giurisprudenza (Università Nazionale del Kyrgyzstan, 1991).

Ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Docente alla Facoltà di Legge dell'Università Nazionale del Kyrgyzstan (1991-1997); Vicedirettore del Dipartimento universitario per gli Affari interni (1997); Deputato al Parlamento (1997-2000); Capo Dipartimento della Procura Generale della Repubblica (2000-2002); Direttore di Dipartimento presso il Ministero della Giustizia (2002-2005).

Dal 2005 è anche Ambasciatore nella Repubblica Federale di Germania, ove risiede.

Oltre al kyrgyzo parla il russo.

[01835-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL MOZAMBICO PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. CARLOS DOS SANTOS

Excelência,

Com particular satisfação, dou-lhe as boas-vindas ao Vaticano como primeiro Embaixador Extraordinário e Plenipotenciário da República de Moçambique junto da Santa Sé. Nesta significativa ocasião, gostaria de lhe

pedir que transmitisse a minha cordial saudação ao Senhor Presidente Armando Guebuza, ao Governo e ao povo do seu país. Certifique-os a minha gratidão pelos votos formulados e das minhas orações pela paz e o bem-estar da nação.

A actividade diplomática da Igreja faz parte da sua missão de serviço à comunidade internacional. Visa especificamente a promover a dignidade da pessoa humana e a encorajar a paz e a harmonia no seio das nações e entre os povos do mundo. Estas condições essenciais para se avançar na realização dum autêntico desenvolvimento dos países encontram o seu significado mais profundo na ordem moral estabelecida por Deus, que procura atrair todos os homens e mulheres para a plenitude da sua vida. Por este motivo, a Santa Sé manifesta-se, com tanta insistência e tenacidade, acerca do respeito pelos indivíduos, da importância vital da família, como célula primária e vital da sociedade, e da necessidade de um bom governo que garanta a promoção dos direitos humanos fundamentais e das legítimas aspirações.

O povo de Moçambique bem sabe que «a paz é um anseio irreprimível presente no coração de cada pessoa» (*Mensagem para a celebração do Dia Mundial da Paz de 2006*, 6). Durante os anos da guerra civil, que devastou a sua nação, as feridas, físicas e psicológicas, de inumeráveis homens, mulheres e crianças inocentes, tornaram-se uma dolorosa lembrança de conflito e de agressão. Nos últimos anos, a devastação da guerra deu lugar, graças a Deus, a um compromisso de paz. Construindo sobre uma reconciliação duradoura, que deriva do perdão e da decisão de olhar para a frente, os moçambicanos vivem hoje esperançados num futuro de maior serenidade. De facto, a sua nação já goza de estabilidade política, de significativo progresso económico e os inícios duma redução da pobreza.

A paz é mais do que a mera ausência de guerra. A paz contém uma intrínseca e invencível verdade, que provém duma ordem planeada e querida por Deus (cf. *Ib.*,3) Assim, para a alcançar, requer-se o exercício da mais alta responsabilidade a todos os níveis. Cabe a todos os cidadãos - especialmente das autoridades civis, políticas e religiosas - contribuir com todos os meios possíveis para o respeito da pessoa humana e a promoção da justiça e equidade a fim de que indivíduos e comunidades possam crescer, livres da ameaça de opressão e corrupção, da afronta da pobreza, dívida ou discriminação.

Senhor Embaixador, o seu Governo introduziu numerosas iniciativas destinadas a aumentar o nível de vida dos cidadãos da nação. A prioridade dada à promoção de projectos sociais e comerciais capazes de criar uma sociedade mais justa e de dar trabalho aos mais necessitados, constitui um estímulo, não obstante a dificuldade do desafio, para todos os que orientam e trabalham no sector dos negócios. Um autêntico desenvolvimento requer um plano coordenado de progresso nacional, que respeite as aspirações razoáveis de todos os segmentos da sociedade. Com efeito, a história humana ensina-nos repetidamente que, se tais planos visam realizar uma mudança duradoura para melhor, devem ser baseados no exercício de um governo responsável e transparente, e acompanhados por um sistema judicial imparcial, pela liberdade política e por uma Imprensa decididamente independente. Sem estes fundamentos comuns a todas as sociedades civilizadas, a esperança de progresso, a que todo ser humano aspira, permanece ilusória.

Ao longo das gerações, as culturas africanas têm celebrado com grande alegria o lugar do matrimónio e da família no coração da sociedade. Com a introdução de leis acerca da família, o seu Governo tem procurado proteger esta verdade e valor fundamental, que permanece na base de todas as civilizações. Todavia, ainda circulam no continente africano tendências para esvaziar o matrimónio do seu conteúdo próprio. A instituição do matrimónio estabelecida pelo Criador com sua natureza e finalidade próprias, e preservada na lei moral natural, não é algo que pode ser modificada para satisfazer os interesses de grupos particulares. O matrimónio implica necessariamente a complementaridade entre marido e esposa que participam na obra criadora de Deus através da geração de filhos. Por isso, os esposos garantem a sobrevivência da sociedade e da cultura e, como Moçambique reconheceu, merecem justamente o reconhecimento legal específico do Estado.

Como Vossa Excelência delicadamente observou, a Igreja em Moçambique serve a nação através de um vasto apostolado educativo e social. Fiel à sua missão espiritual e humanitária, ela procura activamente contribuir para o progresso do povo. Entre as várias obras de caridade em que está comprometida, contam-se o cuidado dos órfãos, cujo número está aumentando devido à tragédia do SIDA, clínicas sanitárias, projectos de

desenvolvimento integral, escolas e uma universidade. Estou certo de que a comunidade católica continuará a responder generosamente às necessidades sociais e espirituais dos moçambicanos que vão surgindo.

Senhor Embaixador, a missão que hoje inicia muito contribuirá para reforçar os laços de compreensão e cooperação entre nós, e espero que o Acordo entre a Santa Sé e Moçambique, em fase de estudo há alguns anos, seja logo levado a cabo. Ao assumir as suas novas responsabilidades, posso assegurar-lhe que os vários Departamentos da Cúria Romana estão prontos a ajudá-lo no cumprimento das suas funções. Sobre Vossa Excelência, sua família e seus concidadãos invoco abundantes bênçãos de Deus Onnipotente.

S.E. il Sig. Carlos Dos Santos*primo* **Ambasciatore del Mozambico presso la Santa Sede**

È nato a Manhica, provincia di Maputo, l'8 luglio 1961.

È sposato ed ha tre figli.

Laureato in Scienze Politiche ed Amministrazione (Università dello Zimbabwe, 1987), si è specializzato in Relazioni internazionali (Università dello Zimbabwe, 1990) ed in Amministrazione (*City University* di New York, 1999).

Entrato in carriera diplomatica nel 1980, ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1980-1982); Addetto della Missione Permanente presso le Nazioni Unite (1983-1984); Segretario presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1984-1985); Segretario di Ambasciata nello Zimbabwe (1985-1990); Capo di Dipartimento presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1990-1991); Capo di Gabinetto del Ministro degli Affari Esteri (1991-1992); Segretario personale del Presidente della Repubblica (1992-1996); Ambasciatore e Rappresentante permanente presso le Nazioni Unite (1996-2002); Consigliere diplomatico del Presidente della Repubblica (2003-2004); Direttore presso il Ministero degli Esteri (2005-2006).

È anche Ambasciatore in Germania, ove risiede.

Ha partecipato a numerose Conferenze internazionali. È stato, tra l'altro, Segretario generale della Prima riunione degli Stati membri della convenzione di Ottawa per il bando delle mine anti-uomo (1997) e Presidente del Comitato preparatorio della Conferenza delle Nazioni Unite sul Commercio illecito di armi leggere (2000-2001).

Parla il portoghese e l'inglese.

[01836-03.02] [Texte original: Français]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI UGANDA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, LA PRINCIPESSA ELIZABETH BAGAYA

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Uganda to the Holy See. I thank you for the greetings which you have conveyed on behalf of His Excellency Mr Yoweri Museveni, President of the Republic, and I gladly reciprocate with good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for His Excellency and the people of Uganda.

Your country, situated at the heart of the Great Lakes Region, shares many of the characteristics present in African culture. Some of these splendid values come clearly to mind: the respect which should be given to every human life from conception to natural death, the place of the family as the corner-stone of society, and an inspiring sense of the sacred.

I have followed closely the challenges facing the African Continent, some of which have presented themselves with varying degrees of urgency in your homeland. Sadly these events often arise from human pride and violence. As the people of your nation aspire to a future of peaceful stability, your Government is faced with the pressing obligation of responding decisively to the needs of all who suffer the tragic effects of prolonged violence in the North. The international community is impelled to give proper attention to the grave humanitarian crisis affecting more than a million people in the region. Many Ugandans and some international organizations have been working diligently, often at great risk to their own lives, to assist these displaced and marginalized people, but the situation calls for increasing cooperation in order to create an environment of security and stability.

Uganda can make progress towards authentic integral development by remaining faithful to her own roots. In this regard, your nation must continue to strive for a balanced blend of the old and the new, always fostering respect for the family and the wider community, material progress and cultural enrichment, together with individual freedom and national solidarity. One of the keys to ensuring the success of a democracy lies in participation in, and encouragement of sincere and fruitful dialogue. The mutual exchange of opinions and ideas is not always easy. Good governance, however, requires that those with different opinions be heard, respected and involved in the decision-making process. It is only in such an atmosphere of understanding and cooperation that true and lasting progress can be realized and sustained. In this context, it is my hope that those in authority will do all in their power to ensure that the Church remains an important partner in this exchange of ideas by assigning her the juridical guarantees that recognize her freedom to carry out the divine mission entrusted to her. Her desire is to promote hope and courage through the proclamation of the Good News to all God's people (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 14).

I would reassure you that the Catholic Church is sincerely committed to assisting all efforts to promote peace. As the Second Vatican Council reminded us, it is the Church's duty to foster and elevate all that is true, all that is good, and all that is beautiful in the human community by consolidating peace among men for the glory of God (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 76). In this regard, the Holy See is hopeful that the Second Summit of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which begins today, will raise hopes for a future of security based on dialogue and cooperation. In the various conflicts some agreements have been reached and a number of those under arms have returned home, availing themselves of the new climate of reconciliation. I remain confident that this regional momentum will be sustained and that those in authority will do all in their power to see that the expectations raised in the hearts of so many are brought to fulfilment. I pray that Almighty God will grant renewed wisdom and courage to those in positions of responsibility so that all parties will return to dialogue and the quest for peaceful and lasting solutions.

It is encouraging to hear of the progress your country is making in promoting long-term development through the reduction of poverty and the extension of educational opportunities. The high proportion of young people in your population gives vitality and renewed hope to the nation. Collaboration between the Church and civil society has yielded many blessings in Uganda, above all in education, in health-care and in the struggle against HIV/Aids, where statistics confirm the practical value of a policy of prevention based on continence and the promotion of faithfulness in marriage. It is my sincere hope that the people of Uganda will continue to draw increasing benefits from this support.

Your Excellency, I assure you of my prayers for the success of your mission as your country's representative to the Holy See. You may be certain that the various departments of the Roman Curia will be ready to assist you. I invoke Almighty God's abundant blessings upon you and upon the beloved people of Uganda.

Principessa Elizabeth Bagaya Ambasciatore di Uganda presso la Santa Sede

È vedova.

È laureata in Legge presso l'Università di Cambridge (1962) ed ha il titolo di Avvocato. È membro dell'Ordine forense d'Inghilterra dal 1965 e d'Uganda dal 1967.

Ha ricoperto, tra gli altri, i seguenti incarichi: Ambasciatore *at large* di Uganda (1971-1973);

Ministro degli Affari Esteri (1974); Delegato alle Nazioni Unite (1974); Portavoce del "Movimento di Resistenza Nazionale" (N.R.M.) (1980-1986); Ambasciatore negli Stati Uniti d'America (1986-1988).

Nel 1998, in procinto di partire per Parigi come Ambasciatore d'Uganda, la Principessa Bagaya si è ritirata a vita privata a motivo del decesso del marito in un incidente aereo.

Nel 2000 è stata insignita della *Medaglia Nalubaale* dal N.R.M., per il suo contributo alla lotta per la liberazione dell'Uganda.

Autrice di saggi sulla cultura ugandese, si è anche occupata di cinematografia.

È anche Ambasciatore in Germania, ove risiede.

[01837-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI SIRIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. MAKRAM OBEID

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Syrian Arab Republic to the Holy See. I thank you for your words and for the greetings which you bring from your President, Mr Bachar Al Assad. Please assure him of my sincere good wishes and my continuing prayers for the well-being and prosperity of your nation.

As you have indicated, Syria from ancient times has witnessed a great flowering of civilizations and religions. Your capital city, Damascus, is dear to Christians as the site of Saint Paul's baptism, following his dramatic experience of conversion during his journey there. And many great saints have led lives of exemplary holiness on Syrian soil. For centuries now, there have been harmonious relations between the Christian and Muslim communities in your country. Syria, then, is uniquely placed to offer to the world an example of peaceful coexistence and tolerance between the followers of different religions. In this regard, I can assure you of the support of the Holy See for the efforts your Government has made both at home and abroad to promote dialogue between religions and cultures. As I recently had occasion to reaffirm, "all people are linked by profound solidarity with one another, and must be encouraged to assert their historical and cultural differences not for the sake of confrontation, but in order to foster mutual respect" (*Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, Ankara, 28 November 2006).

You have spoken of your Government's concern over the annexation of the Golan Heights by Israel in 1967. With a heavy heart, I note that a wide range of territorial and other disputes have led to armed conflicts in recent times that threaten the peace and stability of the entire Middle East. Repeatedly I have pleaded for a cessation of violence in Lebanon, in the Holy Land and in Iraq. The world looks on with great sadness at the cycle of death and destruction, as innocent people continue to suffer and targeted individuals are kidnapped or assassinated. Like many impartial observers, the Holy See believes that solutions are possible within the framework of international law through the implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions. In this regard, I have frequently urged that the various nations of the Middle East should be supported in their aspirations to live in peace within secure internationally recognized borders.

The Church, as you know, emphatically rejects war as a means of resolving international disputes, and has often pointed out that it only leads to new and still more complicated conflicts. Sadly, from the current situation in the Middle East it is only too evident that this is the case. In particular, the scourge of terrorism increases the fear and insecurity experienced by so many in the region today (cf. *Message for the 2006 World Day of Peace*, 9) and in this regard, I am glad to note your words about the Syrian Government's commitment to counter this growing threat to peace and stability. The world looks especially to countries with significant influence in the Middle East in the hopeful expectation of signs of progress towards the resolution of these long-standing

conflicts.

The Catholic community in Syria, as you know, is eager to play its part in national life, in cooperation with fellow Christians from the various Eastern Churches represented there. Your country is certainly fertile ground for progress in ecumenical relations between the followers of Christ and I would like to pledge the continued support of the Catholic Church for this important work. Indeed, I was recently able to do so publicly when I had the joy of visiting the Ecumenical Patriarch in the Phanar; together we signed a Common Declaration expressing the commitment of both Catholic and Orthodox Churches to work in every way towards the goal of full visible communion. I particularly appreciate the recent legislation implemented by the Syrian Government to recognize the juridical status of the Catholic Churches present in your country, in accordance with the norms of canon law. This step augurs well for a future of growing reciprocal understanding between the members of different Churches and different religions in Syria. Moreover, it sets the scene for increasing cooperation between the Church and the Government, that should facilitate the discovery of a solution to differences, such as the question of Church property taken over by the State. It is a sign of real maturity in relations when such matters can be discussed with openness, honesty and mutual respect.

Your Excellency, I am confident that the noble task which you begin today will consolidate these good relations between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Holy See. In offering you my best wishes for the success of your mission, I would like to assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia are always glad to provide help and support in the fulfilment of your duties. Upon you, your family and all the people of Syria I cordially invoke God's abundant blessings.

S.E. il Sig. Makram ObeidAmbasciatore di Siria presso la Santa Sede

È nato a Meshtayeh nel 1944.

È sposato ed ha tre figli.

È laureato in Ingegneria delle telecomunicazioni (Università di Aleppo, 1966).

Ha svolto una lunga carriera presso il Centro delle telecomunicazioni nazionali della Siria, ricoprendo i seguenti incarichi: Ingegnere (1966-1968); Capo Sezione e Vice Direttore della rete nazionale delle telecomunicazioni (1968-1974); Coordinatore nazionale per le installazioni (1974-1976); Direttore della programmazione (1976-1979); Vice Direttore Generale (1979-1980); Direttore Generale e Presidente del Consiglio d'amministrazione (1980-2000).

Dal 2000 al 2006 è stato Ministro dei Trasporti.

È anche Ambasciatore in Spagna, ove risiede.

L'Ambasciatore Obeid è stato anche Membro del Consiglio d'amministrazione dell'Organizzazione araba per le telecomunicazioni spaziali (1980-2000).

Parla l'arabo e l'inglese.

[01838-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL LESOTHO PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL DOTT. MAKASE NYAPHISI

Mr Ambassador,

I am pleased to welcome you at the start of your mission and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Lesotho to the Holy See. I thank you for your

kind words and for the greetings you bring from King Letsie III. Please convey to His Majesty my respectful good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the well-being of all the people of your nation.

As you have observed, you are beginning your mandate shortly after your country's celebration of forty years of independence. In offering renewed congratulations on this significant milestone in Lesotho's history, I would like to reaffirm the Holy See's support and encouragement for your Government as it seeks to strengthen the foundations of democracy and to promote peace and stability within the whole region. In this regard, the recent decision to adopt a new flag symbolizing a nation "at peace with itself and its neighbours", expresses a laudable commitment to these noble goals. Moreover, I am aware that the people of Lesotho themselves have had more than one occasion in the last forty years to demonstrate their resilience and their admirable determination to pursue the path of peace and democracy, whatever pressures to the contrary there may be.

Regrettably, the serious challenges of poverty and food shortage currently facing your people pose serious obstacles to the achievement of your country's objectives. Economic activity has a moral character, and to the degree that every person is responsible for everyone else, the wealthier nations have a duty in solidarity and justice to promote the development of all (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 333). In a world where communications and trade have taken on a global dimension, this duty is all the more evident and the means to discharge it are more readily available. As you know, the Holy See is committed to support the efforts of the international community to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and likewise all initiatives aimed at a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for economic growth. At the same time, she continues to urge governments that receive assistance to be assiduous in cultivating accountability, honesty, and commitment to the rule of law as necessary conditions for ensuring that the aid they receive is used to benefit those most in need (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 113). In this regard, I am gratified to hear Your Excellency's words concerning the high priority that the Kingdom of Lesotho has assigned to the fight against corruption, and I offer you every encouragement in this worthy endeavour.

The scourge of AIDS, which afflicts so many millions in the African Continent, has brought untold suffering to the people of your country. Please be assured of the deep concern of the Catholic Church to do all it can to bring relief to those affected by this cruel disease, and also to their families. In the faces of the sick and the dying, Christians recognize the face of Christ, and it is he whom we serve when we offer help and consolation to the afflicted (cf. *Mt 25: 31-40*). At the same time, it is vitally important to communicate the message that fidelity within marriage and abstinence outside it are the best ways to avoid infection and to halt the spread of the virus. Indeed, the values that flow from an authentic understanding of marriage and family life constitute the only sure foundation for a stable society.

In this regard, I want to assure Your Excellency of the willingness of the Catholic community in Lesotho to continue to play its part in educating future generations of citizens in the values that sustain and promote a healthy social environment. As the Second Vatican Council reminds us, Catholic schools aim to conduct the human formation of their students in "an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity based on the Gospel" (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 8). They set out to shape and direct the ideals of the young in a way that will enable them to assume their adult responsibilities with generosity and integrity, for the good of the whole of society. I know that the Government of Lesotho appreciates the work done by Catholic educators and will carry on providing them with the encouragement they need as they dedicate themselves to this noble task in the name of Christ Our Lord.

Your Excellency, I pray that the diplomatic mission which you begin today will further strengthen the already fruitful relations existing between the Holy See and your country. I assure you that the various departments of the Roman Curia are always ready to offer help and support in the fulfilment of your duties. With my sincere good wishes, I invoke upon you, your family, and all the people of Lesotho, God's abundant blessings.

S.E. il Dott. Makase NyaphisiAmbasciatore del Lesotho presso la Santa Sede

È nato a Mokhotlong il 2 aprile 1952.

È sposato ed ha quattro figli.

Laureato in medicina (*Martin-Luther University*, Halle-Wittenberg – Germania, 1970), ha conseguito specializzazioni in Epidemiologia (Università di Nairobi, 1983) e in Igiene e Salute Pubblica (*John Hopkins University*, Baltimora, U.S.A., 1988).

Ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Dirigente del Ministero della Sanità (1981-1991); Responsabile del Programma per la Salute pubblica presso la "*Lesotho Highlands Development Authority*" (1991-2001); Consulente del *Mokhotlong Government Hospital* (2001-2006).

È anche Ambasciatore in Germania, ove risiede.

Parla l'inglese e il tedesco.

[01839-02.01] [Original text: English]
