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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA CONFERENZA INTERNAZIONALE PER L'ESERCIZIO DEI DIRITTI INALIENABILI DEL POPOLO PALESTINESE (ROMA, 22-23 MARZO 2007)

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Il Sotto-Segretario per i Rapporti con gli Stati della Segreteria di Stato, Mons. Pietro Parolin, ha portato il saluto della Santa Sede ai partecipanti alla Conferenza Internazionale che, convocata dal Comitato delle Nazioni Unite per l'esercizio dei diritti inalienabili del popolo palestinese, si è tenuta a Roma, presso la sede della F.A.O., il 22 e 23 marzo 2007, con l'intento di portare un contributo al rilancio del dialogo di pace tra israeliani e palestinesi.

Riportiamo qui di seguito il testo dell'intervento che Mons. Pietro Parolin ha pronunciato nel pomeriggio del 22 marzo:

• INTERVENTO DI MONS. PIETRO PAROLIN

Mr President,

I have the honour of bringing the Holy See's greetings and good wishes to all who are taking part in this International Conference, being held here in Rome at the headquarters of the FAO. This Conference, organized by the United Nations Committee for the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, is aimed at giving fresh impetus to the reflection and the involvement of the international community, religious confessions, parliamentary groups and civil society, in order to determine the challenges which must be faced and the approach which should be adopted so as to contribute to the building of peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

This Conference is taking place as the Government of National Unity set up by the Palestinian Authority on Saturday last, 17 March, takes its first steps. It is surely positive that this Government is the product of a compromise between the principal Palestinian political groups. It brings to an end several months of severe, armed and violent conflict, which resulted in many victims, often innocent ones, among the Palestinian people who have already suffered so much. The international community is hopeful that the new Government will be an authoritative and trustworthy interlocutor, capable of leading its people, with a sense of responsibility and

realism, to the conclusion of a just peace with the Israelis – who have the right to live in peace in their own State (cf. Address of Pope Benedict XVI to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 8 January 2007) – and to the setting up of the free, independent and sovereign State which all hope to see established for the Palestinians.

The Holy See has always followed with particular attention the events of recent decades: thousands of Catholics live in this land, which we like to call the "Holy Land" since it preserves the living memory of the events which have marked our history of salvation. Millions of Catholics and Christians throughout the world look to this land, with the hope of being able to travel there on pilgrimage.

Recently Pope Benedict XVI himself wished to emphasize this attentiveness by addressing a letter to the Catholics who live in the Middle East. He noted that "in the present circumstances, marked little by light and too much by darkness, it is a cause of consolation and hope for me to know that the Christian communities in the Middle East, whose intense suffering I am well aware of, continue to be vital and active communities, resolute in bearing witness to their faith with their specific identity in the societies in which they are situated. They wish to contribute in a constructive manner to the urgent needs of their respective societies and the whole region."

In this letter, the Pope sets out in concrete detail how this constructive contribution should take place. I take the liberty of quoting the relevant passages, since these contain very useful recommendations as to the spirit in which the work of creating the conditions for a true and just peace between Israelis and Palestinians should be undertaken: "The daily news coming from the Middle East shows a growth of alarming situations, seemingly with no possible escape. They are events which naturally give rise, in those involved, to recriminations and rage, leading them to thoughts of retaliation and revenge. We know that these are not Christian sentiments; to give in to them would leave us callous and spiteful, far from that 'gentleness and lowliness' which Jesus Christ proposed to us as the model of behaviour. Indeed, we could lose the opportunity to make a properly Christian contribution to the solution of the grave problems of our time. It would not be at all wise, especially now, to spend our time asking who has suffered the most or presenting an account of injustices suffered, listing the reasons which reinforce one's own argument. This has often happened in the past, with results which to say the least were disappointing. Suffering in the end affects everyone, and when one person suffers he should first of all wish to understand how much someone else in a similar situation suffers. Patient and humble dialogue, achieved through listening to each other and being intent upon understanding someone else's situation has already borne positive results in many countries previously devastated by violence and revenge. A little more trust in the compassion of others, especially those suffering, cannot but bear efficacious results. Today, many parties rightly plead for this interior disposition.... Through you, my dearly beloved, I wish to make an appeal to your fellow citizens, men and women of the different Christian confessions, of different religions and all who honestly seek peace, justice and solidarity by listening and sincere dialogue. I say to you all: persevere with courage and trust! I appeal to those who hold positions of responsibility in guiding events to cultivate that sensitivity, attentiveness and closeness which surpass schemes and strategies so that they can build societies that are more peaceful and just, truly respectful of every human being."

I conclude my brief greeting by wishing every success to this Conference. In the name of the Holy See, I wish to state my firm conviction that the different religious confessions present in the Holy Land can make a decisive contribution to the relaunching of peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, precisely by working to promote among their members the attitudes which I mentioned.

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