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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 60ma ASSEMBLEA MONDIALE DELLA SALUTE (GINEVRA, 14-23 MAGGIO 2007)

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Dal 14 al 23 maggio 2007 è in corso a Ginevra, la 60ma Assemblea Mondiale della Salute.

La Santa Sede partecipa con una delegazione guidata dall'Ecc.mo Mons. Silvano M. Tomasi, Osservatore Permanente presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite a Ginevra, ed integrata da Mons. Fernando Chica Arellano, Mons. Jean-Marie Musivi Mpendawatu, Padre Robert J. Vitillo, Dott. Maurizio Evangelista; Dott. Giuliano Rizzardini; e dal Dott. Amedeo Capetti.

Riportiamo di seguito l'intervento pronunciato da S.E. Mons. Silvano M. Tomasi:

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

Madam President,

1. The Holy See Delegation wishes to convey its congratulations upon your election as President of this august assembly as well as its sincere gratitude to Dr. Fernando Antezana Aranibar, who provided such excellent leadership for the World Health Organisation Executive Board as it fulfilled its burdensome responsibility to discern succession to the post of Director General following the untimely death of Dr. J.W. Lee.

2. My delegation also expresses congratulations to Dr. Margaret Chan upon her appointment as Director General of the World Health Organisation. We welcome her designation of the health of women and of the people of Africa as major concerns during her tenure in office. The Catholic Church has traditionally been in the first line in the promotion of the authentic health of women, by helping them to harmonize their physical, psychological and social well-being with moral and spiritual values. In this line, the Catholic Church is also convinced of the God-given, equal, and complementary dignity of women and men. The Catholic Church also prioritises the most fruitful expression of complementarity between woman and man – that is, the family which is founded upon lifelong and mutually faithful marriage and which continues to serve as the mainstay of human society. This vision of human dignity, strongly promoted by the Holy See, also is shared by citizens in many

WHO member states. In this same regard, it is the fervent hope of this delegation that discussion on and implementation of Resolution EB 120.R6, "Integrating Gender Analysis and Actions into the work of WHO" will never be utilised to "justify" doing harm to or destroying human life during one of its most vulnerable stages - when still within the mother's womb. Furthermore, the Holy See wishes to invite the WHO member states once again to understand the term "gender" as grounded in biological sexual identity, male or female.

Regarding Africa, the Popes have repeatedly expressed deep concern over its anguished history "where many nations are still in the grip of famine, war, racial and tribal tensions, political instability and the violation of human rights"¹, and Pope Benedict XVI has exhorted the international community, "we must not forget Africa ..."²

3. My delegation wishes to commend, for particular attention by this Assembly, the resolutions and recommendations with regard to the pandemics of Tuberculosis, Malaria, and HIV, as well as those related to the projected exacerbation of Avian and Pandemic Influenza. Much of the threat to health security caused by such diseases could adequately be addressed were the global human family to commit itself to affordable and action-oriented programmes of research, vaccination, treatment, and preventive education respectful of the natural moral law. On 23-25 November 2006, the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care convened more than 500 experts to reflect on "Pastoral aspects of the treatment of infectious diseases." In addressing those gathered, His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the need to implement social justice in the sensitive area of treatment and nursing and therefore to ensure a fair distribution of resources for research and treatment.³ In this same perspective, as the Chancellor of Germany prepared to assume the presidency of both the G8 countries and the European Union, the Holy Father, in a letter to her, expressed the hope that there would be "... a substantial investment of resources for research and for the development of medicines to treat AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and other tropical diseases is needed ... There is also a need to make available medical and pharmaceutical technology and health care expertise without imposing legal or economic conditions."⁴

4. The Holy See shares the concern expressed by the Secretariat of WHO in its Report on "Better Medicines for Children", for the tragic loss of life each year among some 10.5 million children under five years of age; many of these children die of diseases that are treatable in adults but for which appropriate dosages and formulations have not yet been developed for paediatric use.⁵ Attention to this serious concern seems all the more compelling in light of the recently-released report on "Scaling up priority HIV/AIDS interventions in the health sector", which noted, with much regret, that only 15% of HIV-positive children in need of anti-retroviral treatment actually have access to these life-saving therapies. Such treatment coverage is approximately one-half that achieved for HIV-positive adults.⁶ The international community can no longer turn a deaf ear to the life-threatening needs of children, many of whom can be counted among our most needy citizens but who represent, as well, the future of the human community. While steps are being taken to develop "Better Medicines for Children" and to revise and regularly update the Model List of Essential Medicines in order to include those appropriate for paediatric use, research that is ethically-based, transparent, and carefully-monitored, must be conducted on the safety of such medicines before they are approved for treatment of diseases affecting children.

5. As we approach the thirtieth anniversary of the historic Alma Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care, the Holy See Delegation is pleased to note the strategic attention being encouraged at this World Health Assembly on such crucial topics as Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, Rational Use of Medicines, and, in particular, Health Promotion in a Globalized World with a special focus on primary health care. In all the deliberations during this Assembly and in the subsequent implementation of World Health Assembly Resolutions at national and local levels, my delegation urges a perspective on health security that is grounded on an anthropology respectful of the human person in his or her integrity and looks far beyond the absence of disease to the full harmony and sound balance of the physical, emotional, spiritual and social forces within the human person.⁷

Thank you.

1 Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, #51,
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa_en.html

2 *Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See for the Traditional Exchange of New Year Greetings*, Monday, 8 January 2007,
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070108_diplomatic-corps_en.html

3 Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Participants in the 21st International Congress Organized by the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care, Clementine Hall, Friday, 24 November 2006,
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20061124_pc-health_en.html

4 Letter of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to Her Excellency Dr. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, 16 December 2006,
<http://www.evangelizatio.org/portale/adgentes/pontefici/pontefice.php?id=770>

5 "Better Medicines for Children," Report by the Secretariat, World Health Organisation, Sixtieth World Health Assembly, A60/25, 17 April 2007, http://www.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA60/A60_25-en.pdf

6 *Towards Universal Access: Scaling up priority HIV/AIDS interventions in the health sector*, Progress Report by WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF, April 2007, p. 6.

7 Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Message of the World Day of the Sick*, 11 February 2000, n. 13,
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/sick/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19990806_world-day-of-the-sick-2000_en.html

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