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**LE LETTERE CREDENZIALI DEGLI AMBASCIATORI DI: THAILANDIA, SEYCHELLES,
NAMIBIA, GAMBIA, SURINAME, SINGAPORE, KUWAIT**

LE LETTERE CREDENZIALI DEGLI AMBASCIATORI DI: THAILANDIA, SEYCHELLES, NAMIBIA, GAMBIA,
SURINAME, SINGAPORE, KUWAIT

- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI THAILANDIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. CHAIYONG SATJIPANON
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI SEYCHELLES PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. ALAIN BUTLER PAYETTE
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI NAMIBIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. PETER HITJITEVI KATJAVIVI
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI GAMBIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. LA SIG.RA ELIZABETH YA ELI HARDING
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI SURINAME PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. LA SIG.RA URMILA JOELLA-SEWNUNDUN
- DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI SINGAPORE PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. BARRY DESKER
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Alle ore 11 di questa mattina, nella Sala Clementina del Palazzo Apostolico Vaticano, il Santo Padre Benedetto XVI ha ricevuto in Udienza, in occasione della presentazione delle Lettere Credenziali, le Loro Eccellenze i Signori Ambasciatori di: Thailandia, Seychelles, Namibia, Gambia, Suriname, Singapore e Kuwait. 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 THAILANDIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. CHAIYONG SATJIPANON

Your Excellency,

With much pleasure I welcome you to the Vatican and accept the Letters of Credence appointing you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of Thailand to the Holy See. I greatly appreciate the cordial greetings which you have brought from His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. I warmly reciprocate them and ask you to convey the assurance of my deep esteem for the Royal Family, and my prayers for the well-being of the citizens of your noble nation. The firm bonds of respect and friendship between Thailand and the Holy See, which enjoy a remarkable history of more than four hundred years, today remain a source of particular strength that both parties draw upon in their service to the human family.

On the auspicious occasion of the Sixtieth Anniversary of His Majesty's succession to the throne of the Kingdom of Thailand, I had the profound satisfaction of joining all the citizens of your country in recognizing the many blessings which His Majesty has received over these last six decades. I also took the opportunity to express my respect for the loving service he has rendered through his assiduous care to promote unity, religious tolerance and compassion for the poor. Indeed, for centuries the Royal Family and the Holy See have shared a concern and solicitude for the human family, especially the most vulnerable. The joyous Christmas visit of Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn to the Apostolic Nunciature, which included cultural activities and service to the poor, not only warmed the hearts of all present but manifested afresh our common commitment to the marginalized and less fortunate.

The moral characteristic of authentic development is of fundamental importance to integral progress (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 9). 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 development which is not limited merely to satisfying material necessities. Instead, such a concept must also highlight the dignity of the human person – the proper subject of all progress – and thereby enhance the common good of all, including minority groups. While such a goal certainly demands the support of the international community, it is also the case that much can be achieved through regional and local initiatives. Your nation's efforts to promote economic cooperation between ASEAN member States affirm the profound value of communal solidarity. Indeed, economic and social cooperation have helped substantially to overcome historical divisions and animosities in the region. They have also helped to lessen the incidents of local unrest of the type which sporadically emerges in the south of your country.

As Your Excellency has kindly observed, the Church in Thailand serves the nation considerably through her extensive educational and social apostolate. In regard to the provision of education, we can take heart that where schools and training institutes function in a professional manner and are staffed by people of personal integrity with a love of learning, a hopeful future is offered to a nation and most especially to its young. Education is a highly effective means to break the cycle of poverty which still afflicts so many families today, and it is increasingly recognized by the international community as an indispensable part of the way to peace. By the learning and socialization gained through schooling, pupils from all strata of society are integrated into a nation's civic life and are thus able to have the satisfaction of contributing to it.

The Catholic Church, in her service of the human family, reaches out to all members of Thai society without distinction. Her charitable mission, particularly to the poor and suffering, bears witness to "the unbreakable bond between love of God and love of neighbour" (*Deus Caritas Est*, 16). Of particular concern to her is the scourge of AIDS, prostitution and the trafficking of women and children which continue to afflict the countries of the region. Undoubtedly poverty is a major factor underlying this phenomenon and one which the Church constantly addresses. It must also be acknowledged that the decline in moral values, fuelled by the trivialization of sexuality in the media and entertainment industries, leads to the degradation of women and even the abuse of children. The complexity of this unspeakable human exploitation demands a concerted international response. To this end, I note Thailand's increasing commitment to various international conventions and protocols designed to

combat sexual exploitation and trafficking. This international cooperation, coupled with an unbending domestic political resolve to confront the corruption and impunity which facilitate such crimes, will lead to a turning point of hope and dignity for all concerned. In these efforts I can assure you of the Church's utmost moral support and practical assistance.

Over the past year, Thailand has made significant strides towards revitalizing its democratic institutions. I join the people of your country as they look forward to a full restoration of the structures and procedures that will help relieve social tensions and respect the political rights of minorities. I take this opportunity to encourage a fair and just electoral process in the weeks ahead which favours the participation of all and honours the voice of the people.

Mr Ambassador, I am confident that the mission which you begin today will help to strengthen still further the bonds of understanding between Thailand and the Holy See. As you take up your new responsibilities I assure you that the various offices of the Roman Curia are ready to assist you in the fulfillment of your duties. Upon yourself and your fellow citizens I invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

S.E. il Sig. Chaoyong Satjipanon
Ambasciatore di Thailandia presso la Santa Sede

È nato il 14 settembre 1953.

È sposato ed ha cinque figli.

Laureato in Amministrazione Pubblica presso la *Chulalongkorn University* di Bangkok (Thailandia), ha conseguito un Dottorato di ricerca in Legge e Diplomazia presso la Tufts University (U.S.A.).

Entrato in carriera diplomatica nel 1975, ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1975-1978); Primo Segretario della Missione Permanente presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite a Ginevra (1982-1986); Vice-Direttore di Divisione presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1987-1993); Console generale a Sydney (1994-1999); Direttore Generale, col grado di Ambasciatore, presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (2000-2001); Ambasciatore in Indonesia (2001-2002); Rappresentante Permanente presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite ed Istituzioni Specializzate a Ginevra (2003-2006).

Dall'ottobre 2006 è Ambasciatore in Svizzera, ove risiede.

[01787-02.02] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI SEYCHELLES PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. ALAIN BUTLER PAYETTE

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to accept the Letters by which you are accredited Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Seychelles to the Holy See. I recall with pleasure your visit last year in the company of President James Alix Michel and I am most grateful for the greetings which you have brought from him. For my part, I gladly reciprocate with the assurance of my heartfelt prayers for your beloved country and all its people.

Seychelles has been blessed by Providence not only with great natural beauty and a sound economic life, but also with the social harmony and cohesiveness born of shared values and a strong commitment to solidarity in the pursuit of the common good. Your nation can indeed be grateful for its high standard of living, the fruit of the vision and sacrifice of many generations of citizens. Within the broader context of the African continent, Seychelles is well known for the quality and extent of its educational system and the breadth of its network of health services, available to all citizens. This impressive infrastructure offers great promise for the future of the nation, since it provides a firm foundation for continued economic growth and also, even more importantly, for the realization of the deepest hopes and aspirations of the younger generation.

In this regard, I am grateful for Your Excellency's reference to the importance of acknowledging and fostering those spiritual values, born of your nation's Christian roots, which have been decisive in shaping the present of Seychelles and which offer a sure foundation for its future. The Church in Seychelles is rightly proud of its contribution to the life of the nation, particularly through its historic commitment to the education of the young and to the training of the faithful in the virtues essential for integral human development and the building of a free, just and prosperous society. The Catholic community wishes to persevere in this commitment, and, in a spirit of sincerity and respectful cooperation, to work for the promotion of the common good through the preaching of the Gospel, the work of forming consciences in sound religious and moral principles, and the provision of charitable assistance to all, without regard to race or religion.

On this occasion I cannot fail to express my appreciation for the cordial relations existing between the Republic of Seychelles and the Holy See, marked as they are by reciprocal trust and ready collaboration. I likewise express my gratitude for the Government's efforts to support religious education at the primary level and to contribute to the building of new churches and educational structures. This commitment is a concrete sign of the relationship of trust and responsible cooperation which has long existed between the civil authorities and the Catholic community in the service of the young, who represent the hope of society. The nation has, in fact, made the needs of the young and their sound formation a notable priority, and this will surely bear rich fruit as the young men and women of today gradually take their place as the responsible citizens and leaders of tomorrow. I have great confidence in the youth of Seychelles, and through you I send all of them my affectionate greetings and my hearty encouragement to persevere in cultivating the virtues of honesty, fidelity and generous service to others which not only bring personal happiness and deep fulfilment, but also create a society of ever greater fraternity, freedom, justice and peace.

Among the greatest resources of Seychelles is its strong family life, grounded in the mutual love of husband and wife and strengthened by the gift of children. As the first cell of society, the family rightly looks to society for the encouragement it needs in its irreplaceable mission. I can only encourage the efforts being made by all people of good will, in every sphere of national life and policy, to "guarantee and foster the genuine identity of family life" (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 252), by promoting and defending this fundamental institution, acknowledging and meeting the challenges faced by young families, and supporting parents in their responsibilities as the first educators of their children. The future of the state depends in large part on families that are strong in their communion and stable in their commitment (cf. *ibid.*, 213).

Your Excellency, as you now begin your mission on behalf of the Republic of Seychelles, please accept my personal good wishes for your demanding work. Know that the various offices of the Holy See are ready to assist and support you in the fulfilment of your duties. With these sentiments I cordially invoke upon you, your family, and all the beloved people of Seychelles God's richest blessings of joy and peace.

S.E. il Sig. Main Butler Payette
Ambasciatore delle Seychelles presso la Santa Sede

È nato il 3 agosto 1957.

È sposato ed ha un figlio.

Laureato in Storia presso l'Università di Novi Sad (Serbia), ha conseguito un diploma in Relazioni Internazionali (Institut International d'Administration Publique di Parigi, 1989) ed una specializzazione in Relazioni Internazionali e Studi Strategici (Università di Lancaster, Regno Unito, 1995).

Entrato in carriera diplomatica nel 1985, ha ricoperto incarichi direttivi presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1985-1994).

Nominato Ambasciatore nel 1997, è stato successivamente Segretario Generale del Ministero degli Esteri (1997-2004).

Dal 2004 è Segretario di Stato dell'Ufficio Presidenziale.

Risiede a Port-Victoria (Seychelles).

[01788-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI NAMIBIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. PETER HITJITEVI KATJAVIVI

Your Excellency,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you to the Vatican as I accept the letters by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Namibia to the Holy See. I thank you for the greetings and good wishes which you have expressed on behalf of your President, Mr. Hifikepunye Pohamba, and I would ask that you kindly convey to him and to the Namibian people my own cordial greetings and the assurance of my prayers for their peace and well-being.

Having attained independence in 1990, Namibia is one of the world's youngest nations. Yet the history of her people stretches back much further, encompassing periods of great trial and suffering as well as moments of remarkable success. Your Excellency has kindly expressed appreciation for the Church's steadfast presence throughout this history. Arriving in the territory in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Catholic missionaries, in addition to establishing places of worship, also founded numerous schools and hospitals, many of which are still serving the Namibian people today. The work of these institutions gives witness to the "duty of charity" which has always been at the heart of the Church's mission (cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, 32).

As you have indicated, authentic love for one's neighbour must be expressed in tangible ways. Yet in the public realm, it is often difficult to ascertain precisely what will be most conducive to the good of our brothers and sisters. Such discernment calls for a long-range vision. This has been the impetus for the many initiatives your country has undertaken to enhance the quality of life of all Namibians by concentrating in a special way on authentic human development. Indeed, the quality of human life cannot be measured solely in terms of consumable goods. The Church shares the conviction that societies must embrace man's "full range of material needs" as well as his "intellectual, moral, spiritual, and religious life" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 64). I pray that as Namibia implements its strategies for economic and social development, it keeps its sights set on an integral vision of man in his bodily, spiritual and social dimensions.

Namibia's vision for the future recognizes the urgent need to bring the troubling spread of infectious disease to a halt. The tragic toll which HIV/AIDS has had in Southern Africa has been particularly alarming. In this regard, I assure the people of your country that the Church will continue to assist those who suffer from AIDS and to support their families. The Church's contribution to the goal of eradicating AIDS from society cannot but draw its inspiration from the Christian conception of human love and sexuality. The understanding of marriage as the total, reciprocal and exclusive communion of love between a man and a woman not only accords with the plan of the Creator, it prompts the most effective behaviours for preventing the sexual transmission of disease: namely, abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage. It is for this reason that the Church dedicates no less energy to education and catechesis than she does to health care and corporal works of mercy. Mr. Ambassador, I encourage the leaders of your nation to legislate in a way that promotes the life of the family, which must always be held as sacred and most fundamental for a stable society.

Human health also depends on a harmonious relationship with nature, which has been entrusted to man's intelligent dominion. Namibia's Constitution is one of the first to make explicit mention of the grave responsibility to protect the environment and to use its resources wisely. I join you in drawing the global community's attention to the importance of respecting nature as a common good destined for the enjoyment of the whole human family (cf. *Centesimus Annus*, 37). To this end, Namibia has made a concerted effort towards agrarian reform. Yet the road has not been easy. Above all, policies in this area must always uphold the basic right of the hungry to their daily portion of bread (cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42). Therefore, I warmly encourage everyone involved in these initiatives to persevere. By effectively administering titles, opening access to credit, and utilizing the latest

advances in science and technology (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 69), I am confident that your nation will achieve a more equitable distribution of land and reap a more abundant harvest of the earth's fruits in the years ahead.

I assure you, Mr. Ambassador, that the Church will continue to stand with your fellow countrymen as they strive to assist one another in accordance with the divine command to love one's neighbour (cf. *Mt 22: 39*). As you take on your responsibilities, I am confident that you will find the various departments of the Holy See ready to assist you in carrying out your mission. Upon you, your family, the Namibian people and their leaders, I invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

S.E. il Sig. Peter Hitjitevi Katjavivi
Ambasciatore di Namibia presso la Santa Sede

È nato a Okahandja il 12 maggio 1941.

È sposato ed ha cinque figli.

Laureato in Storia, Diritto e Politica presso l'Università di Dar es Salaam (Tanzania, 1967), ha conseguito un master in Sociologia politica presso l'Università di Warwick (Gran Bretagna, 1980) ed un dottorato di ricerca in Storia presso il St Antony's College dell'Università di Oxford (Gran Bretagna, 1986).

Dal 1962 ha svolto attività in favore dell'indipendenza della Namibia, in qualità di: Vice-Presidente del Movimento «SWAPO» (1966-1968); Rappresentante dello «SWAPO» in Gran Bretagna ed in Europa (1968-1976); Segretario e successivamente membro del Comitato Centrale dello «SWAPO» (1976-1983).

Ha quindi ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Membro dell'Assemblea costituente e firmatario della Costituzione nazionale (1989); Membro del Parlamento (1990-1991); Consulente speciale per l'Educazione universitaria (1990-1992); Presidente della Fondazione incaricata della creazione dell'Università di Namibia (UNAM) (1992-1994); Vice-Cancelliere e Professore di Storia della medesima Università (1994-2003); Ambasciatore in Belgio (2003-2006).

Dal 2006 è Ambasciatore in Germania, ove risiede.

Parla OtjiHerero, inglese, afrikaans e tedesco e conosce il kiswahili ed il francese.

[01789-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI GAMBIA PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. LA SIG.RA ELIZABETH YA ELI HARDING

Your Excellency,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Vatican as you present the Letters of Credence by which you are appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of the Gambia to the Holy See. I am grateful for the courteous greetings and sentiments of good will which you have expressed on behalf of His Excellency Colonel Yahya Jammeh, President of the Republic. As I willingly reciprocate, I ask you kindly to convey my gratitude and good wishes to His Excellency, to the civil authorities and to the Gambian people.

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of the Gambia and the Holy See were formally established in 1978. These relations, which the Holy See willingly establishes with individual countries, are a privileged opportunity to work together for the promotion of many important values favourable to the genuine growth of human society. Close and cordial relations can be of great advantage to both parties, especially in areas related to the defence of the life, the dignity and freedom of every human person and the promotion of the health, social development and education of less favoured groups of the population.

Christian love is the force that motivates the Church in your country as it offers its service to the Gambian people through the promotion of important values such as justice, solidarity and peace. The Catholic Church in Africa is committed directly to spread the message of Jesus and consequently to give witness to the love of Almighty God through the practice of charity, like the good Samaritan of the Gospel story (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 41). A similar witness of love and the values of hospitality and compassion are also practised by followers of other religions in your country. In this regard I am pleased to recognize the cordial and peaceful relationship existing in The Gambia between the members of different religions. It speaks well of the friendly disposition of your people and their genuine religious sentiments. I pray that this good atmosphere will be consolidated and protected from the corrupting influence of ideologies that would use religion for political ends.

The Gambia's future is interwoven with the future of West Africa. The Holy See looks with hope on the efforts to consolidate peace in the region. Nothing can dispense with the process of political dialogue where differences are harmonized and group expectations readjusted for the common good of the people. The Gambia has already given an example of this approach in a recent international dispute. I encourage your country to continue along this noble path in the solution of external and internal differences.

Your people continue to aspire, and rightly so, to a life of well-being in dignity and freedom. They seek improved political and social conditions that guarantee growth through initiative, creativity and exchange. The Catholic Church gives its full encouragement and cooperation to all African Governments who strive to strengthen the rule of law and eradicate corruption, to curb political harassment and the abuse of power (cf. *Ecclesia in Africa*, 112). In all spheres of life, especially in public affairs, the value of openness to others and submission to truth is the cornerstone of a human society worthy of the name. The commitment to truth is the soul of justice; it establishes and strengthens the right to freedom and opens the way to forgiveness and reconciliation (cf. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps*, 9 January 2006). Political institutions and public officials are by their very nature open to legitimate control and criticism since they serve the common good of the country and the needs and aspirations of the people whom they represent (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 75). A political climate based on the respect for truth is an indispensable foundation of civil society. Love of their nation should encourage all, authorities and citizens, political parties and the media, to contribute actively to the consolidation of a healthy, open and respectful political environment.

While The Gambia as such has been spared the scourge of war, it still labours under a number of hardships. The Government and its respective departments and ministries, other agencies and political parties are attentive to these situations and can count on the loyal and generous cooperation of the Catholic Church. Living standards and sanitary conditions of sizeable segments of the population require continued attention. I encourage all to become involved in the promotion of the essential equality and complementarity of man and woman. Likewise the struggle against AIDS has to continue on the medical and especially educational fronts. Promiscuous sexual conduct is a root cause of many moral and physical ills and must be overcome by promoting a culture of marital faithfulness and moral integrity. The displacement of populations and the influx of refugees, seeking freedom from the many miseries that armed conflicts bring with them, is still a pressing problem which strains available resources. I am aware of the difficulties involved and I encourage the people and the institutions, public and private, who offer their service to those in need. At the same time I appeal to the international community to play a generous part in supporting this humanitarian task.

Madam Ambassador, these are some of the thoughts that arise from the Holy See's attentive consideration and appreciation of your country and the African Continent. I wish you every success in your mission. You may count on the willing and open cooperation of the Offices of the Vatican and the Roman Curia. I am pleased to renew once again my good wishes to His Excellency President Jammeh, to the Government and people of your country. May Almighty God bestow upon the nation abundant and lasting blessings of well-being and peace!

S.E. la Sig.ra Elizabeth Ya Eli Harding
Ambasciatore del Gambia presso la Santa Sede

È nata il 23 marzo 1956.

Ha quattro figli.

Diplomata in Lingua Francese presso l'*Ecole Internazionale de langue et de Civilisation Française* (1978), ha ottenuto una specializzazione in Amministrazione pubblica e *management* presso il Glasgow College of Technology (Glasgow, Scozia, 1988).

Ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1976-1985);

Responsabile del personale nell'Ufficio del Primo Ministro (1985-1995); Segretario della Commissione del Servizio giuridico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1995-1998); Sotto-segretario nell'Ufficio del Primo Ministro (1998-2000); Capo di Gabinetto presso la Presidenza della Repubblica (2000-2003); Segretario del Consiglio dei Ministri (2003-2006); Segretario Generale della Presidenza della Repubblica (2006-2007).

Dal mese di aprile 2007 è Ambasciatore a Londra, ove risiede.

[01790-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI SURINAME PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. LA SIG.RA URMILA JOELLA-SEWNUNDUN

Your Excellency,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Suriname to the Holy See. I gladly accept your letters of Credence, and I thank you for conveying to me the courteous greetings expressed by President Ronald Venetiaan. I would ask you kindly to transmit my own greetings to His Excellency and to the people of Suriname with an assurance of my continued prayers for the peace and well-being of your country. The congenial spirit that has characterized the diplomatic ties between Suriname and the Holy See since 1994 is a great sign of hope for the future. The Church, which has played a key role in the history of your region, continues to share its peoples' aspirations for peace, social harmony and economic stability.

This year marks the Fortieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, the Encyclical Letter promulgated by my Venerable Predecessor Pope Paul VI to promote "man's complete development and the development of all mankind" (5). The basic principles set forth in this document prompted a vigorous discussion not only among bishops, but also government leaders, lawmakers, economists, businessmen and intellectuals throughout the world. This lively interest continues today, generating fresh ideas for advancing the common good in ways that not only satisfy man's material needs, but actualize his full spiritual potential. *Populorum Progressio* points to the challenges facing formerly colonized countries on their journey towards national sovereignty (cf. 7). This road has not always been easy for Suriname, but its democratic institutions and national identity have been strengthened as a result of this process of adjustment to a new political reality. I cordially invite the people of your nation to draw from the deep well of the Church's social teaching as they plan for the future.

Your Excellency has noted the extraordinary ethnic and religious diversity present in your country. Differences of origin, custom and belief are marvellous opportunities for people to learn and practise tolerance and sympathy for one another. Such habits build social cohesion and lay the groundwork for a robust democracy (cf. *Populorum Progressio*, 64). By becoming more familiar with the various *mores* coexisting within a nation, its citizens learn to set their sights on truths that transcend them both as individuals and as members of local communities. These truths, which need to be upheld by a country's rule of law and the institutions established to uphold it, also inspire men and women of goodwill to leave their limited sphere of self-interest and to place themselves at the service of their neighbours (cf. *Populorum Progressio*, 73). Suriname's five-year plan opens multiple opportunities for furthering the spirit of solidarity among your people as it paves the way to initiatives that will foster social integration. I pray that the implementation of this five-year plan will help guarantee that the basic rights of all—especially minorities and the poor—continue to be respected at every level of society (cf. *Populorum Progressio*, 9).

Your Excellency has also drawn attention to Suriname's membership in various international organizations

aimed at furthering multi-lateral dialogue and cooperation. Your nation's willingness to participate in these organizations demonstrates Suriname's commitment to the resolution of regional differences in ways that honour the rightful autonomy of all interested States. Cooperation with your neighbours will also galvanize efforts to conquer the disturbing trend of international drug trafficking, the insidious effects of which can be felt throughout the global community and are particularly destructive to the poor, the young and the underprivileged. Not only does the flow of illegal narcotics do grave harm to those who abuse these substances, but the very structures necessary to facilitate this trade entangle society in a web of corruption, greed and exploitation. Madam Ambassador, while expressing my sincere appreciation for the actions already undertaken to address this complex situation, I encourage you and all those in your region to continue making every effort towards the eradication of this problem from society altogether, both by cutting it off at its sources and by combating the factors that drive people to self-abusive behaviours: especially poverty, the breakdown of the family and social disintegration.

Madam Ambassador, it is a joy for me to receive you today as you begin the mission entrusted to you. I am grateful for your assurance of Suriname's steadfast commitment to religious freedom and its spirit of cooperation with the Catholic Church in your country. In turn, I am happy to confirm the ready collaboration of the various offices and agencies of the Roman Curia. May your mission strengthen the bonds of friendship and goodwill between your Government and the Holy See. Upon you and all the people of your country, I invoke the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

S.E. la Sig.ra Urmila Joella-Sewnundun
Ambasciatrice di Suriname presso la Santa Sede

È nata l'8 luglio 1968 a Para (Suriname).

È sposata.

Ha conseguito una laurea in Diritto, specializzandosi in Pubblica Amministrazione presso l'*Anton de Korn University of Suriname*.

Ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario del Ministero degli Affari Sociali (1987-1989);

Funzionario del Ministero delle Finanze (1989-1992); Funzionario del Ministero per il Commercio e l'Industria (1992-2000); Ministro dell'Interno (2000-2005); Membro del Comitato Esecutivo della Commissione Interamericana delle Donne (2005-2007).

Attualmente è Ambasciatore a L'Aia, ove risiede.

[01791-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DI SINGAPORE PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. BARRY DESKER

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you as you begin your mission and to accept the Letters accrediting you as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Singapore to the Holy See. I am grateful for your kind words and for the greetings you bring from President Sellapan Ramanathan. Please extend to him my respectful good wishes and the assurance of my prayers for the peace and prosperity of all the people of your nation.

For over twenty-five years now, the Holy See has enjoyed excellent diplomatic relations with Singapore, and looks forward to strengthening them further in the years ahead. As one of the most developed countries in South-East Asia, Singapore has a significant contribution to make to the economic and social advancement of the region. While many parts of South-East Asia continue to suffer from the effects of poverty, crime, and

political unrest, Singapore, as a prosperous, well-ordered and democratic country, gives an important lead that can offer hope and inspiration to others. The Holy See is eager to continue working with your Government in order to promote the well-being of the region and the resolution of conflicts.

Economic success, however, needs a firm ethical grounding if it is to bring lasting benefits to society. Indeed the needs of the person must always be placed at the heart of economic enterprise, since, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, the human person is "the source, the centre, and the purpose of all economic and social life" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 63). Likewise, an authentic democracy is not merely the result of a formal observation of a set of rules, but is "the fruit of a convinced acceptance of the values that inspire democratic procedures: the dignity of every human person, the respect of human rights, commitment to

the common good" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 407). For this reason I encourage your Government in its efforts to involve all citizens and groups to participate in political and social life, for the promotion of those authentic values that lie at the heart of a healthy society.

While Catholics constitute only a small percentage of the population of Singapore, they are happy and willing to play their full part in national life and to contribute to the common good. One particularly important way in which they do so is through the witness of marriage and family life. As the natural community in which human social nature is experienced, the family makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the good of society. Indeed, a healthy state of married and family life is the best guarantee against the damaging effects of individualism or collectivism, because "within the family the person is always at the centre of attention as an end and never as a means" (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 213). For this reason, I am confident that your Government will wish to continue safeguarding the vital part played in society by the institution of marriage and by the family.

In championing human rights, the Church is especially concerned to defend the universal rights to life and to religious freedom (cf. *Message for the 2007 World Day of Peace*, 4). The right to life, from conception to natural death, is the first among rights, and the condition for all others. Moreover, the effective recognition of the right to freedom of conscience and religious freedom is one of the most serious duties of every community that truly wishes to ensure the good of the individual and of society. Your Government is known for its commitment to initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue, respect and cooperation between different religious groups, of particular importance in view of the diverse ethnic and religious affiliation of your population. Be assured that the Holy See is also willing to work with your Government in this area in order to promote common objectives.

Recent years have seen a tragic escalation in international terrorism, often linked to religious motives, and South-East Asia has not been spared the effects of this disturbing development. The Holy See firmly rejects the manipulation of religion for political purposes, and especially the attempt to justify violence in this way. This new threat to world peace calls for a renewed commitment on the part of States to the implementation of *international humanitarian law* (cf. *Message for the 2007 World Day of Peace*, 14). The support shown by your Government for global peace-keeping initiatives is a sign of Singapore's firm resolve to contribute to this worthy goal. The Catholic Church shares the concern of all those who seek to limit the suffering caused by armed conflict, and to promote the peaceful coexistence of peoples and nations.

Your Excellency, I pray that the diplomatic mission which you begin today will further strengthen the fruitful relations 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. I invoke upon you, your family, and all the people of Singapore God's abundant blessings.

S.E. il Sig. Barry Desker
Ambasciatore di Singapore presso la Santa Sede

È nato a Singapore il 29 marzo 1947.

È sposato ed ha due figli.

Laureato in Lettere (Università di Singapore, 1970), si è specializzato in Lettere (Università di Londra, 1973).

Intrapresa la carriera diplomatica nel 1972, ha ricoperto i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario del Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1972-1982); Vice-Rappresentante permanente presso le Nazioni Unite a New York (1982-1986); Ambasciatore in Indonesia (1986-1993); Capo dell'Ufficio esecutivo del Ministero per lo Sviluppo del Commercio (1994-2000); Co-Presidente del Consiglio per la cooperazione nella sicurezza della regione asiatica del Pacifico (CSCAP) (2001-2003).

Dal 2006 è Membro del Consiglio esecutivo della Camera Internazionale del Commercio a Parigi, ove risiede.

[01792-02.01] [Original text: English]

• DISCORSO DEL SANTO PADRE ALL'AMBASCIATORE DEL KUWAIT PRESSO LA SANTA SEDE, S.E. IL SIG. SUHAIL KHALIL SHUHAIBER

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican and to accept the Letters by which you are accredited Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the State of Kuwait to the Holy See. I thank you most heartily for the greetings which you have brought me from His Highness the Amir Shaikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and I ask you kindly to convey to him my warm personal greetings, together with the assurance of my prayers for the continued prosperity of the nation and its citizens.

The coming year marks the fortieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and the Holy See. I willingly take this occasion to express my hope that these good relations will be further consolidated. Your country, which has overcome the devastating effects of violence and war, continues to play an important role in the delicate process of reconciliation which offers the only sure hope for a resolution of the many complex problems affecting the Middle East. Kuwait's democratic Constitution, which reflects the nation's heritage of cultural and religious values, is guided by the principles of justice, respect for the rule of law, and the protection of fundamental human rights. These principles, which are ultimately grounded in the inviolable dignity of the human person, must everywhere find juridical recognition and concrete application if genuine freedom, integral development and peace are to reign among the nations and peoples of the world.

In this regard, I greatly appreciate Your Excellency's reference to your country's acknowledgement of the importance of interreligious and intercultural dialogue for the promotion of peace. Such dialogue – and I think here with satisfaction of the increasing contacts between Muslims and Christians – is essential for overcoming misunderstandings and forging solid relations marked by mutual respect and cooperation in the pursuit of the common good of the whole human family. Children, in particular, need to be educated in the authentic values underlying their own culture and in a spirit of openness to other cultures, respect for others and commitment to peace. In a world where intolerance, violence and oppression are all too often proposed as the solution to disagreements and conflict, there is urgent need of a "human ecology" (cf. *Message for the 2007 World Day of Peace*, 10) capable of extirpating these evils and sowing those virtues which will foster the growth of a truly humane culture of honesty, solidarity and concord.

Kuwait's national life is characterized by the presence of significant minorities, including a high number of resident foreign workers. Their presence in your country is itself a source of enrichment and a constant incentive to establish the conditions necessary for peaceful coexistence and social progress. I cannot fail to mention in this regard the many Catholics living and working in Kuwait, who can freely worship in their own churches. Your nation's Constitution rightly upholds their religious freedom. This fundamental right, grounded in the inviolable dignity of the person, is fittingly considered the cornerstone of the whole edifice of human rights. I express my appreciation of the cordial relations which the Church enjoys with the civil authorities, and my confidence that, as the Catholic community in Kuwait continues to grow, those authorities will readily assist them in meeting the urgent need for new and more adequate structures for worship and assembly.

Kuwait's Catholics have sought to contribute to the development of the larger society, not least through their educational institutions. These, though few in number, are fully committed to forming the minds and hearts of their students in an environment emphasizing sound spiritual values and inculcating respect for the dignity and beliefs of others. It is my hope that, in freely carrying out their proper mission, including the formation of young Christian students in their faith, these schools will help to strengthen the fabric of society by preparing their students to cooperate in building a future of solidarity and hope for coming generations.

Your Excellency, as you now undertake the mission of representing the State of Kuwait to the Holy See, please accept my personal good wishes for the success of your important work. Be assured that you may always count on the offices of the Holy See to assist and support you in the fulfilment of your high responsibilities. Upon you and your family, and upon all the beloved people of Kuwait, I cordially invoke the abundant blessings of the Almighty.

S.E. il Sig. Suhail Khalil Shuhaiber
Ambasciatore del Kuwait presso la Santa Sede

È nato il 23 febbraio 1944.

È sposato ed ha tre figli.

Laureato in Scienze Politiche (Università del Maryland, U.S.A.), ha successivamente conseguito un Dottorato nella stessa materia (Università di Oxford, Gran Bretagna).

Ha intrapreso la carriera diplomatica nel 1970, ricoprendo i seguenti incarichi: Funzionario presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1970-1971); Membro della Missione Permanente presso le Nazioni Unite, New York (1972-1980); Consigliere di Ambasciata a Londra (1981-1987); Direttore di Dipartimento presso il Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1988-1990); Ambasciatore in Zimbabwe (1991), in Giappone (1992-1997), in Spagna (1998-2003) ed in Tunisia (2004-2006).

Attualmente è Ambasciatore a Berna, ove risiede.

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