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HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
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N. 0415

Giovedì 24.06.2010

STATEMENT OF THE HOLY SEE DELEGATION TO 64th SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME (21 JUNE 2010)

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Here below the Statement by H.E. Archbishop Celestino Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See, to the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly at High-level meeting on transnational organized crime, pursuant to resolution 64/179 of 18 December 2009, aimed at fostering universal adherence to the Convention and the Protocols thereto and at strengthening international cooperation:

Mr. President,

My delegation would like to thank you and the panelists for their work in this useful discussion on transnational organized crime.

One result of an interconnected world is the ever-growing interconnected nature of crime. While the ability to communicate and trade with people in all corners of the globe has promoted global solidarity and commerce, it has also led to an escalation in crime across national boundaries. This dynamic in the globalized nature of crime presents new challenges to legal and judicial mechanisms as they attempt to hold criminals accountable and protect their citizens.

The Naples Declaration and the Palermo Convention constitute substantial efforts by the international community to establish cooperation in order to prevent criminal activity and prosecute perpetrators. These Conventions recognized the increasingly indisputable observation that as crime becomes international, the response also must become international.

Today, millions of people are victims of trafficking, of which, over 70%, almost all women and girls, are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This reality is both tragic and inexcusable. The transnational trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation is based on a balance between the supply of victims from sending countries and the demand in receiving countries. The trafficking process begins with the demand. To highlight

victims' rights needs to go along with addressing the problem of demand and, with it, the insidious degradation of human dignity that always accompanies the scourge of trafficking in persons. In fact, rather than effectively addressing the demand, more and more laws are passed which seek to legitimize this dehumanizing work. Even the very global sporting and social events which are meant to foster greater respect and harmony among people around the world have become instead opportunities for the greater exploitation and trafficking of women and girls.

Similarly, the global drug trade continues to have devastating affects on individuals, families and communities around the world. In areas of production, the demand for illegal drugs fuels organized gangs, drug cartels and terrorists. These criminal organizations use the financing from this illegal activity to spread fear and violence so as to secure their pursuit of greed and power. The activities of these individuals and organizations must be addressed urgently by all legitimate means possible in order to allow communities to live in peace and prosperity rather than in fear of crime and hostility.

To address this problem, the international community must not only focus on the areas of production but must also address the ever present demand for illegal drugs. This demand, driven heavily by the developed world, demonstrates that in order to address drug production abroad, efforts must be taken at home. Drug use not only afflicts the international community, but also has immediate detrimental effects on the physical, social and spiritual lives of individuals and their families. Thus, focus also on these individuals is necessary in order to find ways to prevent drug abuse in the first place and to rehabilitate drug abusers so that they can contribute more fully to the common good.

Mr. President,

If we wish to engage in a sustained process to stop and reverse these two major areas of international crime, peoples and cultures will have to find common ground that can underpin human relations everywhere on the basis of our shared humanity. There remains a profound need to uphold the inherent dignity and worth of every human being, with special attention to the most vulnerable of society. In that vein we should focus our efforts on addressing and even criminalizing the devastating demand for prostitution, which dehumanizes women and girls and fuels illegal trafficking around the world.

Likewise, a people-centered approach to the international drug trade must recognize that the consumers of this illegal activity must be held accountable and also provided rehabilitation. Criminal accountability is only one factor in addressing this problem as personal, social and spiritual rehabilitation is necessary for drug abusers and the communities devastated by the producing and smuggling of drugs. Also, efforts by governments and civil society to restore the health of individuals and communities must continue to be encouraged since all people have a claim to social and economic development.

This debate helps to shed light on the need to address international crime in a way which recognizes the growing international nature of crime but also allows this assembly to recognize that this response requires national efforts to address the individual and societal causes for such activity. While it is imperative to hold accountable for their actions criminals who disrupt the common good, so too is it necessary to recognize the rights and dignity of victims and offenders in order to remedy the harm caused by crime.

Thank you Mr. President.

[00945-02.01] [Original text: English]

[B0415-XX.01]
