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INTERVENTO DELL'OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA LV SESSIONE DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELL'ONU

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che S.E. Mons. Renato R. Martino, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso le Nazioni Unite, ha pronunciato ieri, 15 novembre, alla LV Sessione dell'Assemblea Generale dell'ONU sull'Item 42 (Special Session of the General Assembly in 2001 for follow-up to the World Summit for Children):

Mister President:

In the discussion of the upcoming Special Session for the follow-up of the World Summit for Children, the Holy See appreciates the opportunity to add its voice to those who share the same concerns for today's children and young people.

Mister President,

"Despite the technological progress, children still suffer and die from the lack of basic nourishment, or as victims of violence and armed conflicts that they do not even understand. Others are victims of emotional neglect. There are people who poison the minds of the young by passing on to them prejudices and empty ideologies. And today, children are exploited even to the point of being used to satisfy the lowest depravities of adults". These are not new words, but unfortunately they are just as valid and just as necessary. These were the words that Pope Paul VI, addressed to Henry Labouisse, the Executive Director of UNICEF in 1978.

This past April, the Commission on Human Rights expressed its concern that the situation of children in many parts of the world remains critical as a result of poverty, inadequate social and economic conditions in an increasingly globalized world economy, pandemics, natural disasters, armed conflicts, displacement, exploitation, illiteracy, hunger, intolerance, disability and inadequate legal protection.

Those issues concerning children that have demanded the attention of the world for so many years continue to

be the center of our attention. The recently adopted optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are evidence of that concern. The Holy See, as one of the first signatories of the Convention is happy to note that it has also signed these two important protocols which add to the strength of resolve that the world directs toward the protection of children.

In recent years, the United Nations has been aided by the activities of the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflicts and of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, to focus on the needs and challenges that children continue to face. The UN has also welcomed the work of the ILO concerning child labor. These efforts along with the ongoing attention of the offices of the High Commissioners for Human Rights and for Refugees and the United Nations Agencies, especially UNICEF, continue to work toward the fullest implementation of the Convention and the provisions of the Summit.

The Catholic Church has always recognised that children are the most precious and, at the same time, the most vulnerable members of the human family and in need of the greatest protection. The Holy See was an active participant in the elaboration of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and at the World Summit and, as an Observer, participates with special interest in any discussion involving children at the United Nations.

The Holy See looks forward to the preparatory work that these offices and agencies will bring to the Special Session and is confident that their involvement will greatly help focus the discussions and deliberations that will lead to the fruitful conclusion of the Session.

Having applauded the convening of the World Summit for Children, the Holy See looks forward to the upcoming Special Session as an important event at which the family of nations might once again come together to recommit itself to a greater understanding of the means to address the safeguarding of the well-being and the protection of life and rights of the world's children.

My Delegation hopes that the discussions, during the upcoming preparatory meetings, will center especially on how to bring peace to situations of armed conflict and violence, end hunger, protect the family, strengthen education, stop discrimination, provide better health care, build stability and maintain security.

At the same time, my Delegation also sees the need to remind that the rights of children depend on parents, the family and the entire world community. The promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms can only come from a recognition of and a respect for the human dignity shared by each and every person.

Mister President:

It is the hope of the Holy See that the discussions throughout the United Nations system will center around ways to move forward, rather than simply languish on issues that are never resolved. May the upcoming Special Session be a concrete step toward achieving this goal.

Thank you Mr. President.

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