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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 56.MA SESSIONE DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SULLO SRADICAMENTO DELLA POVERTÀ

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Pubblichiamo di seguito il testo dell'intervento che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, S.E. Mons. Renato Raffaele Martino, ha pronunciato ieri a New York nel corso della 56 ma Sessione dell'Assemblea Generale dell'O.N.U. sullo sradicamento della povertà:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. RENATO RAFFAELE MARTINO

Mr. Chairman:

The Holy See has always been concerned with the plight of those living in poverty and has encouraged the finding of solutions to those problems which are the real cause of poverty in the world.

Today, as this Committee discusses the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, as well as the *Report of the Secretary General*, the Holy See wishes to share its observations.

In viewing the statistical information provided in the *Report*, it is important to be reminded of the first principle of the Rio Conference, which states that "Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development". This first principle, this fundamental pronouncement, helps to keep this *Report* and this discussion in its proper perspective-that we are not only dealing with numbers but we are discussing the lives and well being of hundreds of millions of the world's people living in poverty.

This, Mr. Chairman, is for my Delegation, the most important idea in each and every discussion, not only in the Second Committee, the upcoming Conference on Financing for Development and the Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, but in every discussion within the United Nations system. Is this not the *raison d'être* of the United Nations? If, when we discuss the eradication of poverty, we are not discussing the well-being of each and every human person, our discussions are empty words.

We should be cautioned not to be impressed by numbers while the reality tells a different story. Percentages

provide one picture of an overall decrease in the proportion of people living in poverty while in fact, the real number of people living in absolute poverty has not declined. This means that, according to the *Report*, the United Nations is in danger of seeing yet another goal being unmet.

How fortunate we are - the world is - that even when faced with such seemingly overwhelming situations, governments do not simply throw-up their hands in surrender and resignation. The world has witnessed attempt after attempt to find answers and solutions. Thankfully, rather than give up, governments continue the dialogue, hoping that a real, lasting and sustainable solution might be found. It is precisely this hope that strengthens the work of this Committee as well as the entire United Nations system. It is this same hope that allows the people living in poverty to put their trust in finding the means toward a better life for themselves and future generations.

The Holy See welcomes the decision of the Commission for Social Development to also review the progress made in the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. My Delegation believes that the discussion on the eradication of poverty and this *Report* of the Secretary General must be read along side of the *Report on the World Social Situation*, which calls attention to the importance of creating a more just and equitable society, and appeals for a greater economic harmony between the rich and the poor.

In the eyes of the Holy See, consideration must be given to amending the understanding of the foundation of sustainable development. Speaking of "economic development, social development and environmental protection" no longer seems to be sufficient in the light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and other diseases that continue to take their devastating toll, armed conflicts, the great numbers of refugees and displaced persons, and the inability to close the gaps in the provision of basic social services.

Finding answers and solutions will be difficult, but as long as governments and peoples are willing to continue the discussion and the search for a true and sustainable means for the eradication of poverty, the Holy See will support the work, share in the debate and support the outcomes.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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