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## **INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. RENATO RAFFAELE MARTINO, OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE PRESSO L'ORGANIZZAZIONE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SUL RAZZISMO E LA DISCRIMINAZIONE RAZZIALE**

INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. RENATO RAFFAELE MARTINO, OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE PRESSO L'ORGANIZZAZIONE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SUL RAZZISMO E LA DISCRIMINAZIONE RAZZIALE

Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, S.E. Mons. Renato Raffaele Martino, ha pronunciato ieri nel corso della nuova Sessione della Terza Commissione dell'Assemblea Generale dell'O.N.U. su: "*Elimination of racism and racial discrimination-The Report of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*":

### **• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. RENATO R. MARTINO**

Mr Chairman,

No one can deny that, today, the family of nations needs a concerted programme of action to address Racism. We need to explore new ways to foster, for the future, the harmonious coexistence and interaction of individuals and peoples, in full respect of each other's dignity, identity, history and tradition. We need a culture, to use the words of Pope John Paul II, "in which we recognize, in every man and woman, a brother and a sister with whom we can together walk the path of solidarity and peace". (Angelus, 26 August 2001). Our world needs to be reminded that humanity exists as a single human family, within which the concept of racial superiority has no place.

The Holy See worked together with the Delegations of so many countries to ensure that the "World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance" would produce the blueprint for such a programme. Particular thanks are due to the Government of South Africa that hosted and guided the Conference. The preparation of the Conference proved, however, more difficult than was imagined. Certain moments of the preparatory process were tense, certain expressions used were unfortunately inappropriate for a Conference that was to foster tolerance. This is to be regretted. The final results are the fruit of compromise, which may leave many unsatisfied.

It must be asked, therefore, why did the family of nations find it so difficult to address the question of racism? Why was it so difficult to address a complex of contemporary issues, which we all recognize as posing a threat to the maintenance of harmonious international relations? Why was it so difficult to address what we all recognize constitutes a clear offence against the fundamental dignity of persons, men and women, our brothers and sisters, created in the image of God?

These are questions that the family of nations must legitimately pose, because they say something about the state of international relations.

All this, Mr Chairman, must bring us back to what I said in my opening words: the family of nations needs a concerted programme of action to address the question of racism. It needs such a programme urgently and today. The task of launching this programme cannot be put off. We must begin now.

Perhaps, in our reflection on the Durban Conference, we should begin by asking another question: can the world do without the constructive contributions, the fruit in so many cases of our common endeavor, which are gathered together in the final documents of the Durban Conference? Can we leave them aside and leave addressing the question of racism and racial discrimination for another day?

The answer must be a clear no. The fight against racism is urgent. It must be explicit and direct. Too often in history, uncritical societies have stood by inactive as new signs of racism raised their head. If we are not alert, hatred and racial intolerance can reappear in any society, no matter how advanced it may consider itself.

My Delegation therefore urges all nations to take up without delay, individually and in collaboration with other States and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a clear programme to fight racism, using the many positive elements of the Durban documents.

Such a programme must begin at the level of national legislation and practice. The World Conference urged all States to ensure that "their legislation expressly and specifically prohibit racial discrimination and provide effective judicial remedies and redress" (Programme of Action, n.163). Such legislation must address in particular the situation of refugees and migrants, who are often victims of discrimination. It must address the situation of indigenous peoples. It must address minority groupings.

Legislation must be accompanied by education. Education on racial tolerance must be a normal part of the educational programmes for children at all levels. The family, the basic social unit of society, must be the first school of openness and acceptance of others. Government agencies may never justify racial profiling and the mass media must be alert to avoid any type of stereotyping of persons on a racial basis.

In particular, the Holy See would like to address the question of racism and religious intolerance, which is taken up on different occasions in the Durban documents.

The Durban Declaration requests that measures be taken to ensure that members of ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities should not be denied the right to practice their religion. It recognized with deep concern "the emergence of hostile acts and violence against [certain] communities because of their religious beliefs and their racial and ethnic origin in various parts of the world that in particular limit their right to freely practice their belief"(n.59).

True religious belief is absolutely incompatible with racist attitude and racist practices. Pope John Paul II, before the Durban Conference, made an appeal in this sense to all believers, noting that we cannot truly call on God, the father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any person, created in God's image. Through their common belief in the dignity of every individual and in the unity of the human family, believers of all faiths can indeed bring strong leadership in fostering understanding and reconciliation among peoples.

In a world in which religion is often exploited as a means to deepen existing political, social or economic

divisions, it is encouraging to note the growing number of initiatives, both at the local and on the international level, of dialogue among religions. Interreligious dialogue, today more than ever, is a vital element in fostering peace and understanding and in overcoming historical divisions and misunderstandings. Such dialogue can and should be a strong contribution to the fight against racism.

The Durban Declaration (n.8) recalls that religion, spirituality and belief play a central role in the lives of men and women and in the way they live and treat other persons. It stresses how religion contributes "to the promotion of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person and to the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance".

Religion, above all, can be a strong force for that individual and collective conversion of hearts, without which hatred, intolerance and exclusion will never be eliminated. The fight against racism requires a concerted international programme. But the fight against racism begins in the heart of each of us, and in the collective historical memory of our communities. The fight against racism requires a personal change of heart. It requires that "healing of memories", that forgiveness for which Pope John Paul II called in his last Message for the World Day of Peace, when he said: "No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: I shall not tire of repeating this warning to those who, for one reason or another, nourish feelings of hatred, a desire for revenge or the will to destroy".

We cannot go away from this Resumed Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr Chairman, without giving new vigor to the fight against racism. We owe it to the victims of racism, we owe it to our people, and we owe it to humanity.

[00158-02.01] [Original text: English]

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