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## **INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE AL VERTICE MONDIALE PER LO SVILUPPO SOSTENIBILE (JOHANNESBURG, SUD AFRICA, 26 AGOSTO - 4 SETTEMBRE 2002)**

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che S.E. Mons. Renato Raffaele Martino, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'ONU, Capo Delegazione, ha pronunciato ieri a Johannesburg al *Vertice Mondiale per lo sviluppo sostenibile*:

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

Mr. President,

"We are gathered here today in the spirit of peace for the good of all human beings and for the care of creation. At this moment in history, at the beginning of the third Millennium, we are saddened to see the daily suffering of a great number of people from violence, starvation, poverty and disease. We are also concerned about the negative consequences for humanity and for all creation resulting from the degradation of some basic natural resources such as water, air and land, brought about by an economic and technological progress which does not recognize and take into account its limits".<sup>1</sup>

These are the opening words of the Joint Statement signed on 10th June 2002 by His Holiness Pope John Paul II and by the Ecumenical Patriarch, His Holiness Bartholomew I. It seems a fitting way to begin the statement of the Holy See at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

Since the 1992 Rio Conference, widespread discussion and debate have taken place within the international community on Sustainable Development. This is a concept that has entered already into the soil of history, a soil that must be tilled to allow the roots of sustainable development to grow deeply so that it bears fruit that will nourish all of humanity.

Mr. President,

States come to this World Summit with particular interests, needs, resources, rights and responsibilities. The unifying element in this organic blending of legitimate diversities is, and must be, the human person, as stated in the first Principle of the Rio Declaration: *"Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature"*.

"Placing human well-being at the centre of concern for the environment is actually the surest way of safeguarding creation".<sup>2</sup> Taking into account that any sound and lasting agreement for achieving sustainable development must recognize and safeguard the dignity and rights of the human person, the continued promotion of the centrality of the human being in the discussion of sustainable development is a core interest of the Holy See and the main reason of its presence at this important World Summit. The promotion of human dignity is linked to the right to development and to the right to a healthy environment, since these rights highlight the dynamics of the relationship between the individual and society; this stimulates the responsibility of the individual towards self, towards others, towards creation, and ultimately towards God.

In this regard, the Holy See continues to affirm its serious concern for the three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development - the economic, the social and the environmental - and their contribution to true integral human development and the promotion of the well-being of all people. Development is first and foremost a question of people. As noted by Secretary General Kofi Annan, "The United Nations must place people at the centre of everything it does, enabling them to meet their needs and realize their full potential".<sup>3</sup>

The Holy See will not attempt to add to the significant technical discourse underway regarding sustainable development. Nevertheless, the Holy See is deeply committed to the values that inspire actions and decisions regarding sustainable development, since the deliberations that take place have a particular historical context and lead directly to concepts of the person, society and the common good.

It must be recognized that juridical, economic and technical measures are not sufficient to solve the problems that hamper sustainable development. Many of these problems are issues of an ethical and moral nature, which call for a profound change in modern civilization's typical patterns of consumption and production, particularly in the industrialized countries. In order to achieve this change, "we must encourage and support the 'ecological conversion'. (...) At stake, then, is not only a 'physical' ecology that is concerned to safeguard the habitat of the various living beings, but also a 'human ecology',<sup>4</sup> which rests primarily on ensuring and safeguarding moral conditions in the actions of the human being in the human environment".<sup>5</sup>

In order to ensure the fulfilment of human ecology what is needed is "education in ecological responsibility. This education cannot be rooted in mere sentiment or empty wishes. [...] A true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in way of thought and behavior",<sup>6</sup> promoting a true culture of life, which should be the basis for the new culture of sustainable development.

Mr. President,

The earth and all its resources are part of the "common heritage of all humanity". This understanding fosters interdependence, stresses responsibility and underlines the importance of the principle of global solidarity. This reality becomes the foundation of sustainable development by directing the moral imperatives of justice, international cooperation, peace, security, and the desire to enhance the spiritual and material well-being of present and future generations.

In response to selfishness and indifference, either as pertains to natural resources or in the abandonment of those with less power, money or influence, solidarity is a firm and persevering determination to achieve the common good and in doing so to be attentive to others. As such, it is a demanding ideal, one which Pope John Paul II has highlighted by his call for a "globalization of solidarity".

"The great moral challenge facing nations and the international community is to combine development with solidarity - a genuine sharing of benefits - in order to overcome both dehumanizing underdevelopment and the

'over-development' which considers people as mere economic units in a consumer system".<sup>7</sup>

Today, absolute poverty continues to plague too many of the world's people. Too many do not have access to basic social services, namely: clean water, safe sanitation, health care, education, shelter or security. Too many people are unemployed or underemployed. Too many children, especially girls, lack educational opportunities. Too many adults, especially women, lack literacy skills and the chance for economic advancement and social integration. Too many people suffer from the devastation of sickness and disease, particularly the effects of HIV/AIDS and malaria, which continue to have such a devastating impact, especially in Africa and the Caribbean. Too many have little hope for a brighter future.

Since no one can be extraneous or indifferent to the lot of another member of the human family<sup>8</sup> in the context of solidarity, priority must be given not only to the full development of all peoples but especially to the conditions of persons living in poverty. Moreover, poverty today cannot be defined simply in economic terms but more precisely as a person's inability to realize his/her God-given potential.

The seams of human society are today torn by the lack of response to basic human needs of millions of our brothers and sisters. No portion or member of the human family should be reduced to live in sub-human social, economic, environmental, cultural or political conditions. Extreme poverty is perhaps the most pervasive and paralyzing violation of human rights in our world. In keeping with the principle of subsidiarity, the poor must be heard on issues and be at the center of local, national and international programs for sustainable development. Persons living in poverty must be considered as participating subjects. Individuals and peoples cannot become tools but must be the protagonists of their future,<sup>9</sup> able to be the "agents of their own development" and, "in their specific economic and political circumstances, to exercise the creativity which is characteristic of the human person and on which the wealth of nations too is dependent".<sup>10</sup> Any initiative contributing to the development and ennoblement of people needs to address both the human being's spiritual and material existence.<sup>11</sup>

One of the basic elements for human existence is water. Today substantial numbers of our human family face inadequate supplies of water and decreased access to fresh water as well as a severe lack of sanitation services. The primary responsibility for the equitable and sustainable use, protection and management of the world's water resources rests with governments. In the struggle to eradicate poverty, water plays a vital role, not only as pertains to health but also as an indispensable productive element. This World Summit must address this challenge for the availability of this key life-giving resource since if left untreated, death will result for those unable to gain access to water.

Another high priority in sustainable development is rural development. Rural areas account for more than half of the world's population and the poor living in these areas often lack access to basic social services. The rise of modern urbanization sometimes has been the cause for the rural population to be forgotten. But it is precisely the high levels of poverty in rural areas that have contributed substantially as a push factor to migration of populations to urban areas.

Mindful of the principle of subsidiarity, good governance is one of the prerequisites in the fight against poverty. It is in service of the common good. For good governance to be successful there must be new partnerships that promote investment in people and in infrastructures and that will facilitate participation of citizens in decisions that affect their lives. Valued in this context is the democratic system inasmuch as it strives to ensure the possibility of participation of citizens in making political choices and having a voice in governing. This is a process referred to by Pope John Paul II as the "subjectivity of society" which is based on "the creation of structures of participation and shared responsibility",<sup>12</sup> both key to good governance. Governance can be said to be good when the potential of the human being is channeled towards creative participation in government and in society. In the context of the international community, good governance requires that all states, including the poorest and the smallest, have access to the decision-making bodies which determine policy and promote international cooperation.

Mr. President,

In 1995, Pope John Paul II spoke of a renewal of spirit within the UN system: "The United Nations Organization needs to rise more and more above the cold status of an administrative institution and to become a moral centre where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, a 'family of nations'. The idea of 'family' immediately evokes something more than simple functional relations or a mere convergence of interests. The family is by nature a community based on mutual trust, mutual support and sincere respect. In an authentic family the strong do not dominate; instead, the weaker members, because of their very weakness, are all the more welcomed and served".<sup>13</sup>

In our interdependent and globalizing world, it is this spirit of "family" which must be fostered if real progress towards the goals and ideas of sustainable development are to be realized. Only when there is an understanding of mutual need and mutual achievement can humankind move towards the realization of a better life for all of the world's people, all members of the "family of nations". By combining the ideas of need and achievement with the ideas of trust, support and respect, the process of sustainable development will not only move forward but will be strengthened in its efforts toward the eradication of poverty, protection of the environment, the promotion of human rights and the full respect for our shared human dignity.

The outcome of this Summit must place the proper focus on actions toward achieving human, economic and social development, those aspects which make-up the foundation of sustainable development.

The Holy See hopes that the result of this Summit will be not only successful but also innovative and forward-looking and that the commitments that emerge will move the world and humanity forward so as to truly contribute to the spiritual and material well-being of all people, their families and their communities.

To help in the realization of this hope, in the context of this World Summit on Sustainable Development the Holy See calls for a "Gift of Self", since the human being cannot fully find himself or herself except in self-giving. In response to selfishness and indifference, the "Gift of Self" ultimately ensures the well-being of others and of future generations and thus contributes to sustainable development. This concept is the basis of other types of voluntary associations and partnerships that the WSSD wishes to foster and promote. The "Gift of Self" is the noblest use of human freedom and the basis for action toward integral human development.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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1 Pope John Paul II and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, *Joint Statement* at the Fourth Symposium on Religion, Science and the Environment, Rome-Venice, 10th June 2002.

2 Pope John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace*, N. 10, 1st January 1999.3 H.E. Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, Statement at the 44th Plenary meeting of the General Assembly, 56th Session, 10th November 2001.4 Pope John Paul II, General Audience, 17th January 2001.5 Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, N. 38, 1st May 1991.6 Pope John Paul II, *Message for The World Day of Peace*, N. 13, 1st January 1990.7 Pope John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia*, N. 32.8 Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, N. 51.9 Pope John Paul II, *Homily at the Jubilee of Workers*, 1st May 2000.10Pope John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace*, N. 17, 1st January 2000.11 Pope John Paul II, *Ad limina Address to the Bishops' Conference of Nigeria*, 9th May 2002.12 Pope John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, N. 46.13 Pope John Paul II, Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations in its Fiftieth Anniversary Session, 5th October 1995.[01356-02.01]  
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