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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE AL IV FORUM INTERNAZIONALE DI STOCCOLMA SULLA PREVENZIONE DEL GENOCIDIO

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che il Capo della Delegazione della Santa Sede, S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore ha pronunciato ieri a Stoccolma, nel corso del IV Forum Internazionale sulla prevenzione del genocidio, in corso di svolgimento dal 26 al 28 gennaio:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of my Delegation, I wish to congratulate sincerely the Swedish Government for organizing this Forum on preventing genocide. The Forum's emphasis on prevention and on identifying threats of genocide makes it a most fitting conclusion to the three previous ones: on the Holocaust, on Combating Intolerance, and on Truth, Justice and Reconciliation.

Humanity has seen world wars, genocides, mass murders, and ethnic cleansings. However, among all forms of large-scale violence, genocide sets itself apart by the evil motivation behind it, namely, its specific intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a nation, a race, an ethnic or religious group, a defenseless or vulnerable group of human beings, simply for being such. Indeed, genocide literally means to kill a race or a tribe.

Among the many aspects of the question, my Delegation wishes to highlight three specific points:

- first, the need to implement existing legal instruments against genocide;
- second, the central role of the international, regional and sub-regional Organizations;
- third, the commitment to education and vigilance against genocide.

1. First, the need to implement instruments and structures against genocide. In response to the tragic cases of genocides of the last century, the international community developed a series of legal instruments and juridical structures - from the Convention for the Prevention and the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, approved by the United Nations in 1948, to the creation of the International Criminal Court, approved in Rome in 1998.

However, facts attest that the existence of these instruments and structures have not prevented new genocides from happening. Something must have gone wrong, and the international community is duty-bound to examine why they failed; to determine whether the failure was due to instruments and structures which have become wanting in the face of evolving criminal strategies, or due to a lack of political will to implement them, or due to interests overriding the survival of a nation or a group, or due to all these factors combined. This task is all the more compelling if we consider that, since genocide's intent to destroy a nation or a group implies coordinated planning and long-term strategy, signs of an impending threat could hardly escape notice of an attentive international community.

2. Second, the role of the international organizations. The United Nations and other international organizations have the task to muster international resolve to implement, whenever and wherever is necessary, the juridical instruments and structures. They are the privileged fora in the search for refocusing these instruments and structures and, if need be, in creating new ones, to make them more responsive to threats of genocide or other grave violations of human rights.

In this regard, the United Nations remains the central forum for global international rule making. In the last decades, a substantial body of international treaties was negotiated in the UN. This work still continues on this very day. And we observe that a gradually expanding corpus of international law imposes obligations on member States. However, not all member States, in particular developing countries, have the technical capacity to cope with all the international obligations. There is a growing rift between the development of international law and the capability of countries to apply it. Here implementation is a key word in the challenges ahead of us in international law; it stresses the importance of juridical, technical assistance to developing countries.

3. The third and final point my delegation wishes to underscore is our duty to educate individuals and communities, not only on the horrors of genocide, not only to oppose it, but above all, to prevent it from occurring again. A lot has already been learned about genocide. But educating all about its evil is a perennial and ever-timely duty incumbent upon us all. It was in this sense, for example, the U.N. General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 58/234, on 23 December 2003, designating 7 of April this year as the International Day of Reflection to commemorate the victims of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Genocide remains, unfortunately, a constant menace in some regions of the world, where its causes and telltale signs may not be so hard to identify. Genocide is latent in places where eliminating the other is considered a "fast solution" to drawn-out rivalries and unresolved conflicts; where blatantly unjust relations between groups are ideologically justified; where under the surface of apparent order are embers of hatred still burning for lack of mutual forgiveness and reconciliation; where acceptance of past mistakes and a "purification of memory" are obstructed by the fear to confront the historical reality. These are not only identifiable warnings of an impending threat of genocide: if I may add, these are also identifiable factors in the breeding grounds of terrorism.

Mr. Chairman,

The world has become too interconnected to plead ignorance on what is happening on the other side of the global village and, to a large extent, the legal instruments and juridical structures are already in place to nip genocides in the bud. What we need most now is a greater and more courageous will to implement them.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

