



BOLLETTINO

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INTERVENTO DELL'OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA TERZA COMMISSIONE DELL'ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELLE NAZIONI UNITE SUL PUNTO 63: "FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF OLDER PERSONS: SECOND WORLD ASSEMBLY ON AGEING"

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, l'Arcivescovo S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, ha pronunciato ieri a New York nel corso della Terza Commissione della 60ª Sessione dell'Assemblea Generale dell'O.N.U. sul punto 63: "Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing":

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Mr. Chairman,

Three years ago, in Madrid, the Holy See described the elderly as "the guardians of the collective memory, conservers of inter-generational relationships and transmitters of authentic values that defined their existence." But we need to remind ourselves that these noble sentiments will remain empty words if we remember the elderly only when we need them. The fact that people now live longer requires a rethinking of the role of the elderly in society and in the process of development. It would be well, therefore, to create a wide range of opportunities to make use of the potential, experiences and expertise of older persons. This approach and attitude will enable them both to remain connected to society and to continue to make a mark in the world, whether for volunteerism or work. Further, and perhaps more importantly, carving out a niche for the elderly starting from the simple and continued appreciation of their presence by their own family will prevent their stigmatisation and exclusion.

In many societies, caring for dependent and sick individuals is done by older people, particularly older women. In that context, it is important that the availability of, and access to primary health care for older persons be integrated within a larger process of development, with a focus on their specific medical needs and adequate nutrition. These processes might include a safety net where pensions and other schemes are inadequate.

While it is true that the social protection of the elderly is a main responsibility of Governments and private institutions, the Holy See reaffirms the important role also of the family in their comprehensive security, as well as in mental, physical and spiritual health.

For its part, the Holy See offers its support to older persons through various assistance programmes. At present, Catholic agencies and organisations in every continent care for the aged in over 13,000 facilities, including more than 500 centres in Africa, 3,000 in the Americas and 1,400 in Asia.

Mr. Chairman, while social security programmes and medical benefits are essential, my delegation notes here how important are compassion, love, respect, appreciation and fondness for the elderly. We encourage Governments to teach in schools these values with respect to the elderly, members of civil society to exercise them in the home and for such values to be continuously promoted in the media.

Social support services are an extension of the common duty to provide for older family members who are neglected, in order to reduce the impact of globalisation-driven migration and family fragmentation. In low income countries where informal employment and poverty coexist, the nutritional status of the elderly is at risk oftentimes because of poverty, responsibility for supporting grandchildren, living alone and a whole variety of age-related disabilities. A basic social pension and the protection of pension rights are important ways to reach and support the elderly.

The projected demographic transition demonstrates a dramatic increase in numbers of the elderly by 2050, noting the transition from a regime of high fertility and high mortality to low population growth, both in developed and in developing countries. According to the statistics, today there are more than six hundred million people who are over sixty years of age, and it is estimated that by 2050 they will be more than three times that number. It is also calculated that by 2030, 71% of this elderly population will live in developing countries and between 12% and 16% will be in developed countries.

These trends teach us two things: first, that every country must become and remain, as the Madrid Summit of 2002 fittingly said, "a society for all ages" and second, that extra caution may be advisable when fiscal and international policies enter the realm of human engineering.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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