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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA RIUNIONE ANNUALE DELL'OSCE SUI DIRITTI UMANI

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Nei giorni 2-13 ottobre 2006 si è svolta, a Varsavia, la riunione annuale di attuazione degli impegni assunti, nell'ambito dei diritti umani, dai 56 Stati partecipanti all'Organizzazione per la Sicurezza e la Cooperazione in Europa.

La Santa Sede è stata rappresentata da: Mons. Ettore Balestrero, Ufficiale della Segreteria di Stato; Mons. Anthony Frontiero, Ufficiale del Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e della Pace; Mons. Rafał Markowski, Docente presso l'Università "Stefan Kardynał Wyszyński" di Varsavia; Padre Bogusław Trzeciak, S.J, Direttore dell'OCIFE a Varsavia.

Riportiamo di seguito l'intervento pronunciato da Mons. Ettore Balestrero, il giorno 12 ottobre, sul tema della tolleranza e della non discriminazione:

• INTERVENTO DI MONS. ETTORE BALESTRERO

Mr. Moderator,

1. The diverse ethnic, cultural and religious makeup of the participating States makes of this Organization a laboratory of potentially effective and lasting inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic partnerships. Today this has become ever more important: besides attempts to provoke a clash of civilizations, at times there seems to be also an on-going clash *about* civilization, that is about the elements that should constitute a civilization.

2. No partnership among cultures, religions and ethnic identities can be established without mutual knowledge. Creating a partnership requires dialogue. However, dialogue is only the first step, which should lead to identifying a common and solid "ground" upon which a lasting partnership can be established. This common ground should consist in respect and appreciation for religion and culture. Today, religions are all too often manipulated or even misunderstood as part of the problem, when, in fact, they are and should be considered part of the solution to problems that exist between different cultures and civilizations.

3. Consequently, the OSCE should promote responsibility and sensitivity in dealing with religious and cross-cultural issues and, in doing so, this Organization could build upon the invitation of His Holiness Benedict XVI not to consider the mockery of the sacred a right of freedom. *A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion to the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures (Lecture in the University of Regensburg, 12 September 2006)*. Deeply religious cultures consider this exclusion of religion from the universality of reason an attack against their innermost convictions.

Pope Benedict XVI also emphasized that religion should not be combined with violence, but with reason. In this perspective, the OSCE should continue to ensure that religions are not instrumentalised by those who pursue a strategy of tension.

Finally, the educational system and the media have a particular responsibility to avoid stereotypes, distortions, attitudes of intolerance and the frequent belittling of religion and culture. This is an important task for the OSCE. Even more so, if the media, civic and political debates or the educational system give little value to religions or present them using prejudice or disdainful language. Religions are no longer able to effectively work against stereotypes, if they themselves are victims of them.

Mr. Moderator,

4. With reference to the initiatives undertaken by the OSCE and ODIHR to promote tolerance and respect, I would finally like to present some Recommendations.

a. The Tolerance and non-Discrimination programme of ODIHR should pay more effective attention to the implementation of the specific OSCE commitment to fight against prejudice, intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions; this applies too in the context of education as a means to promote respect and understanding and in the work of ODIHR related to *Challenges and Responses to Hate –Motivated Incidents*.

Awareness and due recognition of an increasing bias and at times hostility against Christians and their religion should be pointed out, in everyone's interest. In fact, all religions are at risk as long as any one of them is the victim of stereotype or prejudice.

b. In the fight against discrimination and intolerance, the ODIHR action should stay within the agreed language of the Organization and therefore avoid to extend that action to issues where there is no consensus between participating States.

c. The Holy See would also welcome further suggestions of the CiO Representative on Discrimination and Intolerance, with a special focus on Discrimination and Intolerance against Christians and members of other Religions. After 2 years of work, it is time to formulate practical ideas on how to address intolerance and discrimination against Christians, since is at the heart of her mandate and is strongly connected to the *raison d'être* of her presence in the OSCE.

Mr. Moderator,

5. The Holy See is appreciative of the intention to study the role of young people and youth organizations as agents of change in combating manifestations of hate. All the more, since the Holy See and the Catholic Church are deeply involved in implementing formal and informal educational projects to combat intolerance and discrimination as a way of preventing violence. In this spirit, I am particularly glad to share with the Participating States some good practices of the Catholic Church in this area.

On a general level, it should be recalled that in the course of their long history, Catholic schools have always worked for the human and spiritual promotion of all men and women, independently of their race or social condition. The first free European popular school, founded by Saint Joseph Calasanzio in Rome, in 1597, open

to the poorest of the poor, is an example of this commitment.

6. Today, the Holy See asks that all Catholic educational institutions carry out their mission taking into account the two following directives:

a) To provide an education that is both adequate and according to conscience, in the terms outlined by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights;

b) To contribute to the integral formation of the human person, in regard to whom there can be no place for intolerance, discrimination or racial prejudice. Because of the dignity of the human person, recognised as created in the image and likeness of God, the student must be formed so that he or she may contribute to creating a society which is more just and characterized by greater solidarity, based upon love.

The Catholic school is, therefore, a privileged instrument for teaching students that *all people of whatever race, condition or age, in virtue of their dignity as human persons, have an inalienable right to education. This education should be suitable to the particular destiny of the individuals, adapted to their ability, sex and national cultural traditions, and should be conducive to amicable relations with other nations in order to promote true unity and peace in the world* (Second Vatican Council Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis*, n. 1).

7. This is particularly so today, especially if we look to younger generations. Sentiments of hatred and vengeance have been inculcated in numerous young people in those parts of the world marked by conflicts, in ideological contexts where the seeds of ancient resentments are cultivated and their souls prepared for future violence. These barriers must be torn down and encounter must be encouraged!

In this perspective, the Pope has entrusted to the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue the task of organizing in Assisi, in November 4-8, a meeting of dialogue, prayer and education to peace for young people of different religions and diverse countries. It will be an important occasion for them to reflect upon the modalities in which they can promote and foster tolerance and peace. A final message will made their conclusions public and it will be brought to the attention of both political and religious authorities.

8. Within the Catholic Church too, there are several movements and groups that educate young people in the ways of tolerance and peace. Many of them are associated with great religious Congregations, such as the Salesians, spread throughout the world and explicitly dedicated to the education of future generations.

Taking into account the specific character of the OSCE, without claiming to be exhaustive, I would like here to mention the so called "United World Week", an annual event organized in all the countries where the *Focolare Movement* is present. Thousands of young people radically commit themselves to live and pray for peace and unity. At the end of the event a global teleconference is held, ending with a prayer in which the young people promise to be bearers of peace, not only where there is violence, but also in their home countries. In order to promote a culture of inter-dependence and love among different traditions and ethnicities, an inter-religious youth forum has been established and a musical entirely directed by the youth has been arranged. In Bosnia more than 200 young people from ten different countries mailed 10.000 post-cards with a prayer for peace. This initiative has been awarded with the *Deutschen Bundestag* prize

The *S. Egidio Community* organizes a yearly meeting which attracts many young people. It aims at promoting inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue through lectures, debates, open-ended groups and a march for peace.

Comunione e Liberazione, another Catholic Movement, promotes every summer in Rimini a major event, called: "Meeting for Friendship among Peoples". This year it attracted nearly 900.000 people from all over the world, half of whom were youth. The Meeting is made possible by the generous support of 3.000 university students of different nationalities. Open-ended events are organized to promote an educative debate on the great challenges that contemporary society must face.

Together with other Groups, *Comunione e Liberazione* has also promoted a campaign to stress the relevance of education, as an indispensable tool to build a society of intelligence and humanity.

9. As far as the OSCE is concerned, rather than establishing specific meetings for the youth, it may be opportune to ensure that the work of its institutions take into account the need to spread among the youth the knowledge of the OSCE's work for building democracy and for inter-cultural and inter-ethnic dialogue.

Thank you, Mr. Moderator.

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