



BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 0166

Venerdì 30.03.2007

INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE PRESSO L'UFFICIO DELLE NAZIONI UNITE A GINEVRA SUI DIRITTI DEL FANCIULLO

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che S.E. Mons. Silvano M. Tomasi, Nunzio Apostolico e Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite a Ginevra, ha pronunciato il 23 marzo davanti alla quarta Sessione ordinaria del Consiglio dei Diritti dell'Uomo, sui Diritti del Fanciullo e l'obbligo di protezione:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. SILVANO M. TOMASI

Mr. President,

1. The Delegation of the Holy See very much welcomes the attention given to child protection and to children's rights in recent studies and debates. In fact the child should not only be placed high on the political agenda but right at the centre of concern: the future of society depends on children and on how they are prepared for it, and their vulnerability calls for special protection. A child is neither an instrument nor an object. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child attributes to the child the fundamental rights of a person; it recognizes the child to have the same equality and dignity as any adult person. In its preamble, it affirms that because of its immaturity the child "*needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection before as well as after birth.*" Respect of children is respect of humanity.

2. In many cases, due to lack of will and of resources, good legal provisions and public policies are not implemented, with grave consequences for children. They often become the first victims of famines and wars. They are crippled by unexploded munitions, deprived of schooling, lack sufficient food, are obliged to sleep and survive on sidewalks in urban centres, sick with AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis without the possibility of medicaments, sold to traffickers, recruited into irregular armies, uprooted by forced displacements, compelled into long hours of debilitating work. These millions of young victims are a vivid symbol of existing inequalities and failing systems. Unfortunately these are not the only contradictions affecting children in our globalized world. To many children the right to life is denied; prenatal selection eliminates both babies suspected to be with disabilities and female children simply because of their sex and thus deny the equal and intrinsic value of disabled persons and of girls for their families and for society. In a variety of ways violence against children goes

on, a humiliating violation of their rights as human beings.

3. If respect of the human rights of children measures the health of a society, then the legal recognition of these rights is urgent. The first right of children is that of being born and educated in a welcoming and secure family environment where their physical, psychological and spiritual growth is guaranteed, their potential is developed and where the awareness of personal dignity becomes the base for relating to others and for confronting the future. The target of eliminating violence against children and of providing a constructive and healthy context for their development demands that the State and society concretely support and enable the family to carry out its task. A vital way, in fact, to counteract the vulnerability of children is to strengthen the families in which they are meant to grow, to thrive, and to be formed as responsible and productive citizens in their local communities and in the wider society. Governments must assume their rightful role to protect and promote family life because the family has obvious vital and organic links with society. The creation of conditions leading to peace and economic progress, a continued responsibility of the national and the international communities, will open the way to reducing and eventually eliminating those situations that hurt children in a disproportionate way. My Delegation certainly agrees that all forms of violence against children are unjustifiable, preventable and must be stopped.

4. A coherent effort to eliminate violence against children will therefore reject the exaltation of violence in the public culture of society. Education becomes a critical instrument to instil not just tolerance for coexistence in today's societies experiencing everywhere a greater pluralism, but appreciation and respect of others, openness to dialogue in a concerted search for the common good, and even to love as a more constructive bond for the orderly functioning of society. It would turn into a new form of violence against children if the State were to impose a specific model of moral conscience on children without taking into consideration the moral and religious convictions of parents. Civil society has a major role to play in supporting the family and counteracting all forms of violence against children. On her part, the Catholic Church's over 300,000 social, caring and educational institutions work daily to ensure both a peace-oriented and creative education for children, and the development of their talents, and to provide the reintegration of abused and neglected children into their families, if possible, and into society.

Mr. President,

5. Children are both weakness and hope. To pursue the defence of their rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against them remains an institutional challenge for the international community. Success will be reached if priority is given to the natural role of the family and to the public culture that recognizes that children too are full human persons.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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