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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 62MA ASSEMBLEA GENERALE DELL'ONU SUL DIALOGO INTERRELIGIOSO E INTERCULTURALE E LA COOPERAZIONE PER LA PACE

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Arcivescovo S.E. Mons. Dominique Mamberti, Segretario per i Rapporti con gli Stati della Segreteria di Stato, ha pronunciato ieri a New York davanti la 62ma Assemblea Generale dell'O.N.U., al *High-Level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace*:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. DOMINIQUE MAMBERTI

Mr President,

Three times in the last two decades, leaders of the world's religions gathered at the invitation of the late Pope John Paul II in Assisi, the City of Saint Francis, a person recognized by many as a symbol of reconciliation and brotherhood. There they prayed and offered a common witness for peace. In 1986, they reflected on the roots of peace in the common origin and destiny of humankind. In 1993, they stressed, in particular, that violence in the name of religion is an offence against God. In January 2002, following 9/11, they reaffirmed that violence and terrorism are incompatible with authentic religion. In the recent words of Pope Benedict XVI, Assisi tells us that faithfulness to one's own religious convictions is not expressed in violence and intolerance, but in sincere respect for others, in dialogue and in an announcement that appeals to freedom and reason while remaining committed to peace and reconciliation.

Religion as a factor of peace

Religion, in fact, is essentially a herald of peace.

The use of violence cannot be attributed to religion as such, but to the cultural limitations in which religions are lived and develop in time. For instance, it is well known that, in recent history, political leaders have sometimes manipulated religious identity and that some nationalist movements have utilized religious differences to garner support for their causes. Religion has also been used as a vehicle for violent protest where states have failed to provide development and justice for their people and have blocked other channels of dissent.

However, historic traditions of spiritual discernment, asceticism and service contribute to directing religious fervour away from violence and toward the good of the larger society. Theological reflection submits to critique views tending towards extremism. Philosophical questioning and historical scholarship help religion to deepen its search for truth and show its reasonableness, thus facilitating dialogue and consolidating the impact of religion on peacebuilding and on society as a whole.

Mr President,

There cannot be peace without understanding and cooperation among religions. There cannot be understanding and cooperation among religions without religious liberty.

The safeguarding and promotion of religious liberty for all requires both state action and religious responsibility.

The role of political authorities

States and International Organizations are called to adhere to and enforce the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and allied international instruments, such as The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief.

The full exercise of the right to religious freedom is based on respect for human reason and its capacity to know the truth; it ensures openness to transcendence as an indispensable guarantee of human dignity; it allows all religions to manifest their own identity publicly, free from any pressure to hide or disguise it. Religious freedom includes the right to disseminate one's own faith and the right to change it. Respect for religious liberty would unmask the pretense of some terrorists to justify their unjustifiable actions on religious grounds.

If violence still arises between religious groups, anti-incitement programmes in civil society should be supported, especially when they are initiated by local groups in cross-religious alliances. Anti-incitement activities include education, mobilization of religious leaders, mass movements opposing hate speech and other public acts calculated to spur sectarian violence.

Religious minorities do not pretend special protection or status, as long as their right to religious freedom is fully guaranteed and they are not discriminated against on religious grounds. In fact, they should enjoy the same civil rights as the general population and members of the majority religion, e.g., for the construction and repair of places of worship.

Interreligious responsibilities

Mr President,

Fruitful high-level international gatherings of religious leaders aimed at praying for and promoting peace should be replicated at national and local levels. Indeed, prayer and good intentions are authentic only if they translate into practical gestures at all levels.

If religions want to build peace, they must teach forgiveness. In fact, there is no peace without justice, and there is no justice without forgiveness.

Religious communities can also make a positive contribution to peace by educating their own members in their teachings on peace and solidarity.

The promotion of interreligious programmes focused on development cooperation can also foster dialogue and make significant contributions to peacemaking in societies afflicted by conflict, working with local groups in anti-incitement, peace and nonviolence education, conflict transformation and negotiation.

Mr President,

At a time when the so-called clash of civilizations is gaining currency in some quarters, religions have a special role to play in blazing new paths to peace, in union with one another and in cooperation with states and international organizations. To empower religions to fully assume this role, all of us must work together to ensure that religious freedom is recognized, safeguarded and fostered by all and everywhere. If this High-Level Dialogue is to bear fruit, our message today must get out of the confines of this hall to reach and touch each and every person and community of believers throughout the world.

Thank you, Mr President.

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