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HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
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BASIC AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND THE PALESTINE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION

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Preamble

The Holy See, the Sovereign Authority of the Catholic Church, and the Palestine Liberation Organization (hereinafter: PLO), the Representative of the Palestinian People working for the benefit and on behalf of the Palestinian Authority:

Deeply aware of the special significance of the Holy Land, which is *inter alia* a privileged space for inter-religious dialogue between the followers of the three monotheistic religions;

Having reviewed the history and development of the relations between the Holy See and the Palestinian People, including the working contacts and the subsequent establishment - on October 26, 1994 - of official relations between the Holy See and the PLO;

Recalling and confirming the establishment of the Bilateral Permanent Working Commission to identify, study and address issues of common interest between the two Parties;

Reaffirming the need to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, so that all its nations live as good neighbours and work together to achieve development and prosperity for the entire region and all its inhabitants;

Calling for a peaceful solution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which would realize the inalienable national legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian People, to be reached through negotiation and agreement, in order to ensure peace and security for all peoples of the region on the basis of international law, relevant United Nations and its Security Council resolutions, justice and equity;

Declaring that an equitable solution for the issue of Jerusalem, based on international resolutions, is

fundamental for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and that unilateral decisions and actions altering the specific character and status of Jerusalem are morally and legally unacceptable;

Calling, therefore, for a special statute for Jerusalem, internationally guaranteed, which should safeguard the following:

- a. Freedom of religion and conscience for all.
- b. The equality before the law of the three monotheistic religions and their institutions and followers in the City.
- c. The proper identity and sacred character of the City and its universally significant, religious and cultural heritage.
- d. The Holy Places, the freedom of access to them and of worship in them.
- e. The Regime of "Status Quo" in those Holy Places where it applies;

Recognizing that Palestinians, irrespective of their religious affiliation, are equal members of Palestinian society;

Concluding that the achievements of the aforementioned Bilateral Permanent Working Commission now amount to appropriate matter for a first and Basic-Agreement, which should provide a solid and lasting foundation for the continued development of their present and future relations, and for the furtherance of the Commission's on-going task,

Agree on the following Articles:

Article 1

Paragraph 1:

The PLO affirms its permanent commitment to uphold and observe the human right to freedom of religion and conscience, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in other international instruments relative to its application.

Paragraph 2:

The Holy See affirms the commitment of the Catholic Church to support this right and states once more the respect that the Catholic Church has for the followers of other religions.

Article 2

Paragraph 1:

The Parties are committed to appropriate cooperation in promoting respect for human rights, individual and collective, in combating all forms of discrimination and threats to human life and dignity, as well as to the promotion of understanding and harmony between nations and communities.

Paragraph 2:

The Parties will continue to encourage inter-religious dialogue for the promotion of better understanding between people of different religions.

Article 3

The PLO will ensure and protect in Palestinian Law the equality of human and civil rights of all citizens, including specifically, *inter alia*, their freedom from discrimination, individually or collectively, on the ground of religious affiliation, belief or practice.

Article 4

The regime of the "Status Quo" will be maintained and observed in those Christian Holy Places where it applies.

Article 5

The PLO recognizes the freedom of the Catholic Church to exercise her rights to carry out, through the necessary means, her functions and traditions, such as those that are spiritual, religious, moral, charitable, educational and cultural.

Article 6

The PLO recognizes the rights of the Catholic Church in economic, legal and fiscal matters: these rights being exercised in harmony with the rights of the Palestinian authorities in these fields.

Article 7

Full effect will be given in Palestinian Law to the legal personality of the Catholic Church and of the canonical legal persons.

Article 8

The provisions of this Agreement are without prejudice to any agreement hitherto in force between either Party and any other party.

Article 9

The Bilateral Permanent Working Commission, in accordance with such instructions as may be given by the respective Authorities of the two Parties, may propose further ways to address items of this Agreement.

Article 10

Should any controversy arise regarding the interpretation or the application of provisions of the present Agreement, the Parties will resolve it by way of mutual consultation.

Article 11

Done in two original copies in the English and Arabic languages, both texts being equally authentic. In case of divergency, the English text shall prevail.

Article 12

This Agreement shall enter into force from the moment of its signature by the two Parties.

Signed in the Vatican, fifteenth of February, 2000

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