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Il Santo Padre ha ricevuto questa mattina in Udienza:

Ecc.mi Presuli della Conferenza Episcopale dei Paesi Bassi, in Visita "ad Limina Apostolorum":

Em.mo Card. Adrianus Johannes Simonis, Arcivescovo di Utrecht

con l'Ausiliare:

S.E. Mons. Gerard Johannes Nicolaus de Korte, Vescovo tit. di Cesarea di Mauritania;

S.E. Mons. Martinus Petrus Maria Muskens, Vescovo di Breda;

S.E. Mons. Willem Jacobus Eijk, Vescovo di Groningen;

S.E. Mons. Joseph Maria Punt, Vescovo di Haarlem, Amministratore Apostolico "ad nutum Sanctae Sedis" dell'Ordinariato Militare per i Paesi Bassi

con l'Ausiliare:

S.E. Mons. Johannes Gerardus Maria van Bursteden, S.S.S., Vescovo tit. di Tibili;

S.E. Mons. Jean-Claude Périsset, Arcivescovo tit. di Giustiniana prima, Nunzio Apostolico in Romania e in Moldavia;

S.E. Mons. Anselmo Guido Pecorari, Arcivescovo tit. di Populonia, Nunzio Apostolico in Rwanda, con i Familiari.

[00352-01.01]

COMUNICATO CONGIUNTO DEL COMITATO PERMANENTE DI AL-AZHAR PER IL DIALOGO FRA LE RELIGIONI MONOTEISTICHE ED IL PONTIFICIO CONSIGLIO PER IL DIALOGO INTERRELIGIOSO"No to generalisation and yes to self-criticism"

The Joint Committee of the Permanent Committee of al-Azhar for Dialogue with the Monotheistic Religions and the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue held its annual meeting in the offices of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican City, 24-25 February 2004 A.D., equivalent to 4-5 Muharram 1425 A.H.

Two papers were presented during the meeting on *The rejection of generalisations and the importance of self-criticism*, from the Christian side by Dr Youssef Kamal El-Hage, Professor at the Notre Dame University of Louaizeh, Lebanon, and from the Muslim side by Sheikh Fawzi al-Zafzaf, President of the Permanent Committee of al-Azhar for Dialogue with the Monotheistic Religions.

The members of the committee considered and discussed the contents of the two papers. They noticed that there is agreement in the two religions, Christianity and Islam, in refusing generalisation in judging people and that where a sin is committed, whether by an individual or by a community, only that individual or community is to be held accountable and not others. Both religions advocate self-criticism at the individual and community level and the examination of conscience and asking pardon, a way of behaviour that may be an example to others.

The Joint Committee in issuing this common declaration addresses an appeal to all to avoid generalisations in judging people and to allocate responsibility only to those who have committed transgressions and not to blame innocent people for the misdeeds of others. It also appealed to all to practise examination of conscience and to admit guilt whenever applicable as a way of returning to right conduct.

In addressing this appeal the aim of the Joint Committee is to universalise justice, peace and love among all.

Sheikh Fawzi al-Zafazaf

Archbishop Michael L. Fitzgerald

President

President

Permanent Committee of al-Azhar

Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

for Dialogue with Monotheistic Religions

[00353-02.03] [Original text: English]

**INTERVENTO DELLA DELEGAZIONE DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA 48a SESSIONE DELLA COMMISSIONE
SULLO STATO DELLE DONNE (NEW YORK 1-12 MARZO 2004)**

Dall'1 al 12 di marzo si tiene a New York la 48a Sessione della Commissione sullo stato delle Donne.

Pubblichiamo qui di seguito il testo dell'intervento pronunciato in data 4 marzo 2004, dalla Prof.ssa Marilyn Ann Martone, membro della delegazione della Santa Sede:

• INTERVENTO DELLA PROF.SSA MARILYN MARTONE

On behalf of my Delegation, allow me to extend congratulations to you and the bureau on your election. You will have my Delegation's cooperation and keen interest in these proceedings.

In the context of their essential role to the maintenance of peace and security of the world, women have demonstrated time after time their substantial contributions that are based on untiring concern for achieving solidarity and the common good for all humanity. Women are especially gifted in showing others the urgent need to arise above self-interest and to work for the betterment of all so that the pressing needs of basic health care, education, and economic and social security become a reality now.

In many regions of the world, women are present and active in every area of life - social, economic, cultural, religious, and political - and make an indispensable contribution to the establishment of economic and political structures ever more worthy of humanity. Through feminine insight, women enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations between and amongst people more honest and authentic.

Women do this all at great sacrifice. This sacrifice mandates authentic equality in every area: equal pay for equal work, protection for working mothers, fairness in career advancements, equality of spouses with regard to family rights, and the recognition of everything that is part of the rights and duties of all in a democratic society. This is a matter of justice and of necessity. My delegation supports these key elements of a just society found in the Beijing Platform for Action (Fourth World Conference on Women). In all these areas, a greater presence of women in society will prove most valuable and will help to manifest the contradictions present in society when it is organized solely according to the criteria of efficiency and productivity or of brute force.

With regard to the conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution, my Delegation would like to underline a few aspects of the problem.

First of all, too many women today are still victims of violence and war. The United Nations have given attention appropriately on different occasions not only to the tragedy of domestic violence but has also expressed its commitment to overcoming the suffering endured by women in national and international conflicts; this includes the problem of refugee and internally displaced women who are having to cope not only with their own personal suffering but also with the fatigue and responsibility of taking care in such desperate situations of the children and elder members of the family. Sadly, when armed conflict emerges at any level, women become the special target of combatants in ways that dehumanize their dignity. The time has come to condemn and sanction vigorously all sexual brutalities perpetrated against women. In this regard, the involvement of women in the management of material help and medical and psychological assistance to the victims of such violence could be of significant importance.

There is another form of conflict that has terrible consequences on the life of millions of human beings. We must not fail, in the name of the respect due to them, to condemn the widespread hedonistic and commercial culture which encourages the systematic exploitation of girls and women. The trafficking in women and children must

cease. The contribution of women in the decision-making process to combat this shameful trafficking can be decisive, because they are the first victims of such crimes.

My delegation is convinced that the road to ensure swift progress in achieving full respect for women and their identity involves more than simply the condemnation of discrimination and injustices, necessary though this may be. Such respect must first and foremost be achieved through an effective and intelligent campaign for the promotion of women, involving all sectors of the human society. Women should be teachers and builders of peace and should be given this opportunity by means of an adequate preparation.

Thank you, Madame Chair.

[00354-02.01] [Original text: English]

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