



# SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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## **INTERVENTO DELL'OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE PRESSO L'UFFICIO DELLE NAZIONI UNITE A GINEVRA NELLA 60a SESSIONE DELLA COMMISSIONE DEI DIRITTI UMANI**

INTERVENTO DELL'OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE PRESSO L'UFFICIO DELLE  
NAZIONI UNITE A GINEVRA NELLA 60a SESSIONE DELLA COMMISSIONE DEI DIRITTI UMANI

Nella 60a Sessione della Commissione dei Diritti Umani delle Nazioni Unite, che si svolge a Ginevra dal 15 marzo al 23 aprile prossimo, in occasione del dibattito sul razzismo, la discriminazione razziale, la xenofobia e tutte le forme di discriminazione, il 22 marzo scorso S.E. Mons. Silvano Tomasi, C.S., Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede, ha pronunciato l'intervento che pubblichiamo qui di seguito:

### **• INTERVENTO DELL'OSSERVATORE PERMANENTE DELLA SANTA SEDE**

1. The wound of racism keeps returning to poison human relations. The forms taken by contemporary manifestations of racism are evident in spontaneous, officially tolerated or sometimes institutionalized behaviour. In recent events intolerance, based on the idea of group superiority on the basis of the group's origin or attributed characteristics, provokes new violence and death, ethnic cleansing, refugee flows and untold misery. Racist behaviour and self-affirmation become occasionally the cover for undemocratic hold on power and for a rationalized justification for corruption. It is not difficult to notice from the information networks that practically in all continents, with the increased mobility of people, immigrants, especially if in an irregular situation, find themselves exposed to attacks and forced marginalization as a result of prejudice, even when their presence is needed for economic and even demographic reasons.

While race defines a human group in terms of immutable and hereditary traits, racist prejudice, which feeds racist behaviour, can be applied by extension, with equally negative effects, to all persons whose ethnic origin, language, religion or customs make them appear different. In this way the right to full participation in society is denied to a variety of groups often set apart by the additional burden of great poverty.

2. The fight against racism remains therefore a contemporary commitment. Major positive steps have already been taken in recent decades in the effort to contain and eliminate prejudice and discrimination. The cornerstone remains the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with its principles of equality without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property,

birth or other status. These principles were further elaborated in other major instruments like the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), and the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban from 31 August to 8 September 2001.

3. The challenge now facing us is to implement the growing body of directives protecting human rights and aiming in particular at the elimination of every form of racism and related intolerance. To keep the political will focused on this major concern, the Working Groups established as a follow-up of the Durban Conference continue the search for concrete ways and means to achieve the objectives that the international community has set for itself in this regard. International instruments, national legislation, active forces of civil society, educational and religious institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations, by converging on the same goal in a comprehensive way, can defeat any persistent form of racism or at least contain their nefarious consequences.

4. The achievement of these objectives has to begin from an attitude of acceptance of the "other" and of a genuine appreciation of the multiplicity of gifts that human groups and cultures contribute to the whole of the human family. This necessary positive outlook can come only from deep convictions to make the art of living together in peace and mutual respect a reality. A strategic tool in this regard is education, especially human rights education, that must go beyond the external expressions of a culture and reach out to the value system and the spiritual belief that sustain the identity of a people. Dialogue at this level will go a long way to eliminate the walls built by prejudice and historical circumstances. All major religions strive to inculcate this inner rooting of tolerant behaviour and at the same time they provide encouragement to teach by example first of all. Together with education the role of the media is essential in forming a public opinion that is sensitive and respectful of the other. Care should be taken that selectivity of information may not lead to prejudice, both in the case of historical analysis and analysis of present political and ideological situations. On the other hand, a very positive service is provided by the media when they highlight successful best practices against racism.

5. In the search for adequate measures to protect people from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, *inter alia*, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action recognizes "the necessity for special measures or positive actions for the victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to promote their full integration into society". Those measures "should aim at correcting the conditions that impair the enjoyment of rights and the introduction of special measures to encourage equal participation of all racial and cultural, linguistic and religious groups in all sectors of society and to bring all onto an equal footing" (no.108). Such a victim oriented approach calls for access to some mechanism of complaint and redress that will effectively respond also to the just expectations of the poorer and more marginalized people

6. The consequences of racism, obvious in some extreme cases of open conflict and forced exile, are probably not sufficiently calculated for the more ordinary circumstances like in work situations where the lack of equality of treatment and opportunity affects negatively productivity. In this as in other cases, a vicious circle develops as racism leads to vulnerability and marginalization and these conditions in turn are utilized to reinforce prejudice and racism.

7. In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the struggle against racism and all forms of intolerance stands a chance of success when human dignity and equality are recognized as the true foundation of social relations. The equal dignity of every person and of every human community provide a launching pad into the future that can stimulate the creativity of the international community to continue devising all practical measures necessary to achieve such a noble goal of eliminating all forms of racism and related intolerance and of promoting fair and inclusive society.

