



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE  
**BOLLETTINO**

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## INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALL'ECOSOC A NEW YORK

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che l'Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Organizzazione delle Nazioni Unite, l'Arcivescovo S.E. Mons. Celestino Migliore, ha pronunciato ieri a New York all'ECOSOC sul tema: "*Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance: Lessons learnt from the Tsunami*":

#### • INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. CELESTINO MIGLIORE

Mr President,

As we consider the lessons to be learned from the response to the Tsunami of 26 December 2004, let me start by congratulating the agencies of the United Nations on their swift response to the emergency. It should also be said that, to this unprecedented crisis, there came an unprecedented humanitarian response which saw ordinary people meet and even surpass the pledges of their own governments in the face of a terrible and widespread act of nature.

When the Tsunami struck, the Holy See was able immediately to provide over \$4m in emergency relief. Dozens of Catholic agencies quickly followed this up, with projects for the reconstruction of homes and schools in India, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Globally, it is estimated that around \$650m has been made available by agencies related to the Holy See to the peoples affected by the Tsunami, to say nothing of the work still being done by a number of local religious institutions present and active in humanitarian and developmental projects throughout the region.

The funds just mentioned were firstly applied to the most urgent emergency needs: safe drinking water, food, shelter, clothing, trauma and health care, medical follow-up, hygiene and sanitation, cooking equipment and disease control. Refugees, IDPs and women and children especially vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation, were among the first to be helped.

After the emergency phase, reconstruction and rehabilitation projects were begun, including the rebuilding of homes, schools and hospitals, not to mention the provision of agricultural and fishing equipment to restore independent livelihoods, and help in transportation and educational programmes. Reunification of families and

support for them both continue to be of vital importance.

In this context, the Holy See is convinced that religious and spiritual support is integral to any genuine human healing, though it is a dimension that is all too often overlooked. We are committed in all circumstances to respect religious and cultural differences, and to working amicably to facilitate greater trust among believers of all faiths and non-believers. Interreligious cooperation and peacebuilding initiatives will continue to form an important element of the Church's work there.

To judge, then, from the remarkable reaction throughout the world to the crisis, it would appear that the first and most important lesson to be learned is that there is a very great deal of good will among ordinary people which often lies untapped. The natural and heartfelt solidarity of the peoples of the world was there for all to see and, at a time when the international media help make the world ever more like a global village, it is heartening to know that a deep sense of our common humanity showed itself quickly and positively in favour of the survivors of this tragedy. As the international community helped real people in real situations of need, a spontaneous understanding of the centrality of the human person, with a broad sensitivity and respect for people's cultural and religious circumstances, became clear.

Another lesson to be learned is in the field of funding for emergencies and for development. With such substantial amounts of money available and an urgent need to deliver aid, there is always going to be an inevitable temptation to use up precious resources without proper planning. In this sense, our agencies and institutions in the areas affected by the Tsunami specifically examined ways of avoiding the creation of a bloated bureaucracy to deal with the emergency, in order to ensure the delivery of the greatest amount of funding to its proper final destination. Streamlining and coordination are crucial in avoiding the careless attribution of resources.

Mention should also be made of the need to increase international cooperation in order to create and strengthen national, sub-regional, regional and international mechanisms for prevention, preparedness and mitigation of natural disasters. Renewed commitment to the implementation of initiatives for improving early warning capacity is to be welcomed.

Finally, we note that the tragedy, having generated so much attention, good will and financial support, has actually presented the affected governments and peoples with an unprecedented opportunity for reconstruction and development. The internal, bilateral, north-south and south-south cooperation which was seen at the time is a platform, not to be squandered, but to be built upon for the good both of the survivors and of all the peoples of the region.

Thank you, Mr President.

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