



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE **BOLLETTINO**

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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALLA SECONDA SESSIONE DEL CONSIGLIO DEI DIRITTI UMANI

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Il 21 settembre scorso, nel corso della seconda sessione del Consiglio dei Diritti Umani. S.E. Mons. Silvano Maria Tomasi, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite e le Istituzioni specializzate a Ginevra, ha pronunciato l'intervento che riportiamo qui di seguito:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. SILVANO MARIA TOMASI

Mr President,

Thank you for the time allotted to discuss the issues of religious tolerance and freedom, topics that certainly require careful and extended reflection in the years ahead. For now it can suffice to note that where there is doubt, the best interpreter of a text is its author. The Holy Father Benedict XVI has explained what he meant. It is mere fairness to take Him on His words.

1. Twenty five years ago, the international community adopted by consensus the important Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.¹

2. Today the implementation of this Declaration remains in many ways still a distant goal, a work in progress requiring concerted action to promote the standards of religious freedom recognized by the international community. In several countries intolerance and violent acts directed in particular at people and communities of different religions violate their rights in a variety of ways.

3. The Delegation of the Holy See observes that legal structures have not everywhere sufficiently evolved to protect religious minorities and their members, even when they are citizens of the countries concerned.

4. The rapid impact of the information and communication technologies gives new meaning to the global village beyond its economic networks. A plurality of ideas and cultures are brought closer and are mingled even in remote corners of the world, and the vast movements of migrants make them visible and concrete in daily life.

What emerges is either a potential for fears and conflicts, or a new phase of mutual enrichment and respect that afford the opportunity to convey the contributions of all to more justice and a stable peace. An attitude of openness and mutual acceptance is therefore more urgent than any law tending to impose them, the education of the heart and the mind to recognize and value each person as an equal member of the human family. Communication media and textbooks should contribute in this effort and not stir up emotions with ambiguous or false messages that foster intolerance and close the minds to a future of conviviality.

5. To build such a future, a deeper understanding is needed: 1) of the fundamental role and contribution of religion in the lives of individuals and communities; 2) of the differences among religions so that an honest and fruitful dialogue may take place; 3) of current geopolitics since regional and religious identities do not necessarily coincide, and this calls for a correction of perceptions.

6. Religion and the reason for religious tolerance are rooted in the person, believer or not. Focusing on ideologies rather than on people and communities of believers carries the risk of transforming religious claims into political self-interest.

Mr. President

7. In conclusion, allow me to use the words of Pope Benedict XVI to Representatives of Muslim Communities last year: "The lessons of the past must help us to avoid repeating the same mistakes. We must seek paths of reconciliation and learn to live with respect for each other's identities. The defense of religious freedom, in this sense, is a permanent imperative."²

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ The dignity and equality inherent in all human beings, a basic principle of the Charter of the United Nations, were seen as fundamentally violated when the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion a person held and exercised "either individually or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching" (art. I, 1) is disregarded.² Apostolic Trip of His Holiness Benedict XVI to Cologne (Germany) on the occasion of the XX World Youth Day (August 18-21, 2005) - Audience to the Representatives of Muslim Communities.[01336-02.02] [Original text: English][B0476-XX.02]
