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♦ Intervento del Cardinale Segretario di Stato Pietro Parolin alla 76.ma Sessione dell'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite

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Pubblichiamo di seguito l'intervento che il Cardinale Segretario di Stato Pietro Parolin, Capo Delegazione della Santa Sede, ha pronunciato nel corso della 76.ma Sessione dell'Assemblea Generale delle Nazioni Unite, dal titolo *Building resilience through hope: to recover from COVID19, rebuild sustainably, respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people, and revitalize the United Nations*:

Intervento del Segretario di Stato

H.E. Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State of the Holy See
Head of the Delegation of the Holy See to the
Seventy-Sixth Session of the United Nations General Assembly
United Nations General Assembly Hall

25 September 2021

Building resilience through hope:
to recover from COVID19, rebuild sustainably,
respond to the needs of the planet, respect the rights of people,
and revitalize the United Nations

[Introduction on Resilience through Hope]

Mr. President,

I am pleased to extend to you and all of the representatives of nations the warm greetings of Pope Francis.

In his Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* on fraternity and social friendship, Pope Francis surveyed the many challenges facing the international community, such as war and conflict, mistreatment and violence, hunger and poverty, inequality and marginalization, individualism and mistrust, extremism and polarization, attacks on human dignity, the COVID-19 pandemic and threats to the environment, among other “dark clouds.” To confront such difficulties effectively, we must approach them with “renewed hope” based on the “abundant seeds of goodness in our human family,” like those heroically sown in response to the medical, social, economic and spiritual dimensions of the pandemic. Such actions reveal, he indicated, that the medicine the world needs is not “isolation and withdrawal into one’s own interests,” but rather fraternal closeness and hope grounded in the “reserves of goodness present in human hearts.”[1]

The theme of this General Debate, “Building Resilience Through Hope,” focuses our attention on the crucial importance of hope in human affairs. Hope is different from optimism, which is an expectation that things will turn out well, or the idea that somehow history will inevitably develop on an upward trajectory. Instead, we know that our achievements are not unassailable: the maintenance of peace, the protection and promotion of human rights, the advance of integral human development, the care for our common home,should never be taken for granted, but must be sought and secured by every generation.

As new crises arise and others persist, we need hope to persevere in addressing them. Hope keeps us motivated when problems and disagreements seem unsolvable, it facilitates forgiveness, conscious that through reconciliation there can be a better future. It fosters resilience and inspires us to put in hard work even when we may not be able to see results achieved in our lifetime.

For us, Christians, hope is the most divine gift that can exist in the heart of mankind (*cfr. General Audience, 27 September 2017*). Itsees and loves what will be, in time and in eternity (*Charles Peguy, The Portal of the Mystery of Hope*): hope «is expectation, fervent expectation, impassioned by the ultimate and definitive fulfilment of a mystery, the mystery of God’s love» (*General Audience, 15 October 2014*).

[Recovering from COVID-19]

Mr. President,

Pope Francis declared last year in his address to the General Assembly that “we never emerge from a crisis just as we were. We come out either better or worse.”[2] To emerge better from the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to build on a renewed sense of fraternal solidarity. The pandemic has taught us how interconnected our world is, how every State has its own vulnerabilities and that no State is capable of resolving the crisis on its own.

Resilience demands that the international community put into action the commitments expressed during the Special Session of the General Assembly on COVID-19 last December. We must work together to remedy the situation of those who are on the “pharmaceutical margins,”[3] and to alleviate the needless suffering and death that they and so many others have and continue to endure. This is particularly the case with regard to vaccines, which must be available to everyone, especially in conflict areas and humanitarian settings.[4]

Resilience requires a renewed examination of how health care systems have largely been overwhelmed by the pandemic and left so many without sufficient care or any care at all. Even today many have no access to testing, basic care, or vaccines or even to the energy infrastructure that would make such care possible. Resilience calls for an examination of the fragility and shortfalls of our economic systems, which have left many behind as a result of the severe economic downturn and made the poor even more vulnerable.

Finally, resilience involves perseverance in the fight against corruption, since the harm of corruption has become particularly exposed among the political and distribution failures of the pandemic.

[Rebuilding sustainably]

Mr. President,

The pandemic has negatively impacted development programs and activities, as well the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Five years of progress on the 17 sustainable development goals was halted, and in some cases reversed, by the virus and its consequences. Making sustainable development a reality by 2030, which two years ago appeared to be an uphill struggle with no certainty of success, has now become such a daunting challenge that tremendous efforts will be needed.

To rebuild sustainably, we must rethink the relationship between individuals and the economy and ensure that both economic models and development programs remain at the service of men and women, particularly those on the margins of society, rather than exploiting both people and natural resources.[5] Sustainable development, if truly at the service of the human person, must also incorporate the poor and their gifts and creativity as agents of their own integral development. We must unleash the promise and hope they embody, for their good and the good of the entire human community.[6]

[Responding to the Needs of the Planet]

Mr. President,

The upcoming COP 26[7] in Glasgow is an important opportunity for resilience, as the international community has the chance to commit anew to the protection of our common home. We are compelled to strengthen our ambition, since we are presently experiencing the effects of decades of inaction in terms of the extreme flooding, drought, wildfires, melting glaciers, receding shorelines, malnutrition and respiratory diseases that rising temperatures are precipitating. It is far past time to act. The tragic natural disasters that have struck our brothers and sisters in Haiti, a people already suffering from political and humanitarian challenges, is a clear call to the international community to work together in solidarity for a durable and sustainable development of which the people of Haiti may be the principal protagonists.

Recent attention toward the environment has spawned great advances in technology, allowing us to provide for our needs sustainably. Human creativity and innovation in improving efficiency and decreasing the costs of clean energy are making environmentally conscious choices by governments and individuals easier. Such innovations, while spurring similar entrepreneurial creativity, also inspire hope.

[Respecting the rights of people]

Mr. President,

Hope, all too frequently is denied and remains elusive to so many women and men, boys and girls because of another man-made threat to our common existence, namely war, conflict and the possession and use of weapons of mass destruction. The scourge of war brings death and destruction, harms the environment, devastates communities and so often entraps regions and countries in a downward spiral. Sadly, we continue to witness the terrible impact of crises and conflicts across the globe. The recent aggravated humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and the ongoing political tensions in Syria and Lebanon, as well as in other places, are a stark reminder of the impact that conflicts press upon peoples and nations. The Holy See calls upon States to heed the call of the Secretary-General and Pope Francis for a global ceasefire and a shared humanitarian responsibility.

The damage to our fellow human beings and our planet is a special cause of concern with regard to nuclear

arms and biological and chemical weapons. The threat of nuclear weapons, possessed under the guise of nuclear deterrence, creates an ethos of fear based on mutual annihilation, and poisons relationships between peoples, obstructs dialogue, and undermines hope. Humanitarian and security issues require us to end the nuclear arms race and to undertake effective measures toward nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and prohibition. The entry into force last January of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) is a major step forward. It is the firm hope of the Holy See that this will also spur progress in the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), scheduled to hold its Review Conference next January.

Mr. President,

Pope Francis considers one of the most serious causes for concern in today's world to be the "crisis of human relationships" flowing from a way of life dominated by selfishness and by the culture of waste, where human values and the related transcendent dignity of the person are often trampled.[8] This "anthropological crisis" is not a philosophical or academic dispute, but a crisis with enormous practical consequences for human rights.

Our societies today are the theatre of many injustices where human beings are maltreated, exploited, ignored, killed, or left to languish in humanitarian emergencies. Women and girls, persons from different indigenous, racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds experience violence and oppression or are reduced to second-class citizens. Far too often, humanitarian law is taken as a recommendation rather than an obligation by both State and non-State actors alike. Refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons are increasingly left in limbo or even left to drown, unwelcome and unable to find a new home to raise their family in dignity, peace and security. Religious believers endure harassment, persecution, death and even genocide on account of their faith. The elderly and persons with disabilities are cast aside, especially when they are frail or considered burdensome. Innocent children are deemed problematic, discarded by society even before they are born or have the chance to bring their own, unique contribution into the world. The family, which the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes as the "natural and fundamental group unit of society,"[9] is misrepresented.

This is evident also in novel interpretations of existing human rights, separated from their underlying universal values. In many cases, "new rights" not only contradict the values they are supposed to support but are imposed despite the absence of any objective foundation or international consensus.[10] The Holy See believes that while depriving human rights of their original universal dimension, these new partial interpretations sadly become the ideological benchmark of spurious "progress" and another ground for polarization and division. Sadly, we are facing this in the constant pursuit of introducing controversial new agendas that drive UN processes contrary to the bodies' given mandates.

In an age in which many universal human rights continue to be violated with impunity, these attempts in fact confuse, divert from implementing the human rights conventions, and impede the attention and energy that the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights and dignity deserve. We need to build resilience through hope and consensus in this noble institution, while defending human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to life, to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and to freedom of opinion and expression, and not to undermine them.[11]

[Revitalizing the United Nations]

Mr. President,

To foster the resilience necessary to help the world emerge better from the various crises we face, the United Nations must constantly be renewed through returning with greater fidelity and resolve to the core principles and purposes enshrined in its Charter. True revitalization means not just making structures and mechanisms more efficient but ensuring that the institution lives up to its true and commonly agreed upon aims, rather than becoming a tool of the powerful. The structural deficiencies that exist cannot be remedied either by sluggish solutions or fast fixes but require a commitment to what Pope Francis terms a "healthy politics."[12]

The need for a healthy politics, based on the pursuit of the common good and universal truth, is particularly important at the Security Council, whose members are called to become the foremost artisans of peace throughout the world, constantly recommitting themselves to place international peace and rule of law above national interests or partisan ideologies.[13] Far too often, the latter inevitably leads to gridlock, while the poorest and most vulnerable, who look to the Council for signs of hope, continue to suffer, pushed into greater despair. Revitalizing the United Nations must include examining whether the structure conceived in 1945 remains adequate for 2021 and beyond, as well as recognizing that from those States to whom more is given, more is to be expected, especially with regard to responsibility for the common good.

In addition to the structural aspects of revitalization, greater attention must be given to promote and safeguard the mandates of UN entities and fora. The Holy See views with concern the push of some to break down the helpful division of labor among Committees, commissions, meetings and processes, turning all into bodies that focus on a limited number of disputed issues. Furthermore, the principle of consensus must be safeguarded. One common step in the right direction is preferable to many steps in different directions.

To help the world build resilience through hope, the United Nations must lead by example, and the States, entities, and personnel that comprise the Organization all have a key role to play in helping set that example. The Holy See is vigorously committed to playing its part.

[Conclusion]

In conclusion, Mr. President, to recover, rebuild, respond, respect and revitalize involves a rediscovery of resilience through firmly grounded hope.

Many are the signs of hope, even in our weary societies. To be builders of peace in our societies means to find these seeds and shoots of fraternity. « The God of the covenant asks us not to yield to separatism or partisan interests. He does not want us to ally ourselves with some at the expense of others. Rather, he wants individuals and communities to be bridges of fellowship with all» (*Meeting with the Representatives of the Ecumenical Council of Churces and some Jewish communities in Hungary, Address of His Holiness, 12 September 2021*). Let us see in the eyes of migrants and refugees: they are full of suffering and hope. Let us work together to give them the future to blossom in peace.

In March, while the effects of the pandemic were still being very much felt, Pope Francis went to Iraq to encourage the Iraqi people in striving to give the world an example of resilience through hope.

Visiting the birthplace of Abraham, to whom Jews, Christians and Muslims all look as their father in faith, the Pope recalled the image of a storm-tossed sea to describe what is involved in building a culture of peace.

“It demands,” he said, “especially amid the tempest, that we row together,” and that no one “be concerned simply for his own affairs.” He continued, “There will be no peace as long as we see others as *them* and not *us*. There will be no peace as long as our alliances are *against* others, for alliances of some against others only increase divisions. Peace does not demand winners or losers, but rather brothers and sisters who, for all the misunderstandings and hurts of the past, are journeying from conflict to unity.”[14]

That is the way of hope, which all of us should walk in this Organization.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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[1] Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*, 30, 54, 55, 196.

[2] Pope Francis, Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, 25 September 2020.

[3] Pope Francis, Address to the Members of the “Banco Farmaceutico” Foundation, 19 September 2020.

[4] Security Council Resolution 2565 (2021).

[5] Pope Francis, Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 8 February 2021.

[6] Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 228.

[7] 26th Session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

[8] Pope Francis, Address to the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, 8 February 2021.

[9] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 16.3.

[10] Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Statement at the 46th Session of the Human Rights Council, 23 February 2021.

[11] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 3, 18 and 19.

[12] Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 177, 179.

[13] Cf. Pope Francis, Address to the Diplomatic Community Accredited to the Holy See, 7 January 2019.

[14] Pope Francis, Address at the Interreligious Meeting on the Plain of Ur, 6 March 2021.

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