



HOLY SEE

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE TO THE UNITED NATIONS 25 EAST 32ND STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10016-0903 (212) 370-7885

ADDRESS

BY

H.E. Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo

**Secretary for the Holy See's
Relations with States**

**at the General Debate of the
59th Session of the UN General Assembly**

New York, 29 September 2004

Mr. President,

1. The Holy See is honoured to take part in the general debate of the General Assembly of the United Nations for the first time since the Resolution of last 1 July which formalized and specified the rights and prerogatives of its status as a Permanent Observer, a status which the Holy See has enjoyed since 1964. It is therefore, my pleasant duty to express sincere gratitude to all the member States. In approving the aforesaid Resolution, they signalled once again the **particular bond of cooperation between the Apostolic See and the United Nations**, already underlined by Pope John Paul II on his first visit to this assembly, exactly 25 years ago. It is a bond which, in some sense, is connatural to them: both the Holy See and the United Nations have a universal vocation; no nation on earth is foreign to them. Both the Holy See and the United Nations have an overriding objective of peace: in fact peace, this supreme good, is written into the founding Charter of the United Nations, and it lies at the heart of the Gospel message which the Holy See is responsible for proclaiming to all nations.

In this significant circumstance, I am honoured to convey to you, Mr. President, and to all of you gathered here to represent your noble countries, the respectful and cordial greetings of Pope John Paul II. I bring a special greeting to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan, and also to his worthy assistants. Their work, as recorded in the Annual Report of the Secretary General A/59/1, above all, with reference to conflict prevention and peacekeeping in the world, deserves the appreciation and gratitude of us all.

2. Several of the themes included on the agenda of this General Assembly may be considered essential for attaining the supreme objective of peace and for the future of humanity. To quote only a few: United Nations and new human world order; pursuit of the Millennium Goals; total and general disarmament; sustainable development; globalization and interdependence; international migration and development; human rights; human cloning. I shall limit myself to a brief presentation of the Holy See's position regarding some of these issues.

3. Among the Millennium goals, pride of place goes to the theme of **poverty and development**. I say pride of place, because it affects the right to subsistence of hundreds of millions of human beings, surviving - as best they can - below the threshold of what is necessary, as well as tens of millions of undernourished children unjustly deprived of the right to live. In order to find a lasting solution to these inhumane conditions, it is necessary to progress, under the aegis of the UN, towards a more flexible and more just international trade system. Furthermore, financial structures are needed

which would favour development and cancellation of foreign debt for the poorest countries. Likewise, the results of scientific research and technology need to be generously shared, specifically in the field of health. On this matter I need say no more, since the Holy See's position has already been presented once again by Cardinal Angelo Sodano himself, the Secretary of State, at the conference on hunger and poverty held in New York on 20 September last. I repeat only this: the urgency of the situation cannot tolerate delay. It is a question of justice, not of charity, even if the need for charity remains and will always remain.

4. Of immediate relevance to the supreme good of peace is the theme of **total and general disarmament**. If it is true that the production and sale of arms to other countries endangers peace, it follows that severe and effective international controls are needed. The commitment of the UN in this area is attested by the various Conventions it has supported with reference to weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional weapons. But we are only at the beginning of a long process, with huge economic interests as obstacles along our path.

The problem of weapons of mass destruction is clearly to be distinguished from that of conventional weapons; but the latter have a terrible and unending contemporary relevance in the numerous armed conflicts that stain the world with blood, and also in terrorism.

5. **Regional armed conflicts** are so numerous that there is no time to list them all. However, there are some that I cannot omit to mention.

Above all there is the **Israeli-Palestinian conflict** which dominated the whole of the second half of the last century. This conflict is not simply contained within the narrow territorial boundaries of the region itself. Those directly involved are the Israeli Government and the Palestinian Authority, and they have the grave duty to demonstrate their desire for peace. With this end in view, a "road map" has been drawn up and formally accepted by both parties; may they proceed along it with determination and courage! But the conflict is also followed with intense interest and often with passion by large sections of humanity. The Catholic Church, present in Palestine for 2,000 years, invites everyone to turn their backs on any action likely to destroy confidence, and to utter generous words of peace and make bold gestures of peace. And if peace is the fruit of justice, let it not be forgotten - as Pope John Paul II has reminded us - that there can be no justice without forgiveness. Indeed, without mutual forgiveness. This clearly requires greater moral courage than the use of arms.

Then there is the **Iraqi conflict**. The position of the Holy See concerning the military action of 2002-2003 is well known. Everyone can see that it did not lead to a safer world

either inside or outside Iraq. The Holy See believes it is now imperative to support the present Government in its efforts to bring the country to normality and to a political system that is substantially democratic and in harmony with the values of its historic traditions.

The Holy See is gravely concerned about **various African countries** Sudan, Somalia, the countries in the Great Lakes region, Ivory Coast, etc., scarred by bloodshed arising from mutual conflicts and even more from internal strife. They need active international solidarity: more specifically, and connaturally, the African Union needs to intervene authoritatively so as to bring all legitimate interested parties around a negotiating table. The African Union has already demonstrated its ability to act successfully in some cases: it deserves recognition and support.

6. I have mentioned the theme of **terrorism**, an aberrant phenomenon, utterly unworthy of man, which has already assumed global dimensions: today no State can presume to be safe from it. Hence, without prejudice to the right and duty of each State to implement just measures to protect its citizens and its institutions, it seems obvious that terrorism can only be effectively challenged through a concerted multilateral approach, respecting the *ius gentium*, and not through the politics of unilateralism. No-one is in any doubt that the fight against terrorism means, first and foremost, neutralizing its active breeding-grounds. But the underlying causes are many and complex: political, social, cultural, religious; for this reason, what is still more important is long-term action, directed, with foresight and patience, at its roots, designed to stop it from spreading further and to extinguish its deadly contagious effects.

The Holy See and the entire Catholic Church is actively involved in this work. It is involved through its educational and charitable institutions which, wherever they are, are committed to raising the cultural and social level of the population, without any discrimination, especially on religious grounds; it is involved through inter-religious dialogue, which has grown in intensity ever since the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council: this dialogue is directed towards objective mutual knowledge, sincere friendship and, wherever possible, free collaboration in the service of humanity. The Holy See will always be grateful to the authorities of other religions who demonstrate openness to such dialogue, and also to the civil authorities who encourage it, without any political interference, respecting the distinction between the religious and the civil sphere and the fundamental human right to freedom of religion.

7. The right to freedom of religion is sanctioned, together with other **fundamental rights**, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948. In reality, such fundamental human rights stand or fall together. And man stands or falls with them.

For this reason - in the view of the Holy See - every effort has to be made to defend them in all fields. For this to happen, one particular danger must be avoided, which is found today in various countries and social settings. It is the idea that these fundamental human rights, as sanctioned by the Universal Declaration, are expressions of a particular culture and are therefore highly relative. No: at heart, they are expressions of the human being as such, even if the fact remains that, at different times and in different cultures, they may have been and may still be differently applied, in more or less adequate and acceptable ways.

8. Among the fundamental rights, or rather foremost among them, as the Universal Declaration explicitly states, is the **right to life of every individual**. The Holy See could say a great deal about the right to life of every individual, because the essence of its message is the "Gospel of life". *Evangelium Vitae* is the title of a well-known Encyclical by Pope John Paul II, issued on 25 March 1995. The question of human cloning comes under the same broad heading. In a few weeks this General Assembly will resume its debate on human cloning. In this respect the Holy See is pleased to reaffirm its commitment to support the advancement of medical science, conducted always in a manner that respects human dignity, because it offers healing and cure for various diseases. With this end in view, the Holy See reiterates its support for the procurement and use of adult stem cells, and believes that the way forward is to draw up and implement a clear Convention that will result in a comprehensive ban on human cloning.

9. "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world": so begins the Preamble of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. It is one of the many undeniable merits of the UN to have proposed to the conscience of all humanity, more than 50 years ago, these secure principles for progress towards peace. Over the years, however, the United Nations Organization, like every human organization, has needed to adapt its procedures to take account of developments on the world political scene so that its work for the promotion of peace can become more effective. The first results of the high-level commission set up for this purpose by Secretary-General Kofi Annan were published last June. The Holy See will be able to offer some explicit evaluation on the occasion of the debate on the subject to be held next week. For now I should simply like to recall Pope John Paul II's words for this year's World Day of Peace. He reminded us that "humanity today is in a new and more difficult phase of its genuine development" and for this reason - echoing the voice of his predecessors - he called for "a greater degree of international ordering". This could be brought about by giving organizations like the UN special prerogatives to facilitate action to prevent conflicts at times of international crisis, and also, when absolutely necessary, "humanitarian intervention", that is, action aimed at disarming the aggressor. Yet the "greater degree of international ordering" could be achieved still more effectively if the

UN were to rise from "the cold status of an administrative institution" - to quote Pope John Paul II once again to the status of "a moral centre, where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, a family of nations".

10. Mr. President, now and in the future, the UN can always count on the Holy See to be not only an attentive Permanent Observer, but also a travelling companion, ever ready to support its complex and difficult activity in conformity with the proper nature and according to the proper possibilities of the Holy See and also to collaborate, in a spirit of freedom and friendship, with all the member States.

Thank you, Mr. President.