

7 October 2003

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte,  
President of the 58th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Symposium to Commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the  
Encyclical "Pacem in Terris" of Pope John XXIII and the Silver  
Jubilee of the Pontificate of His Holiness Pope John Paul II**

Archbishop Renato Martino, Archbishop Migliore, Mr Secretary General, Archbishops and other clergy, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The commemoration of the Fortieth Anniversary of the Encyclical "Pacem in Terris" of Pope John XXIII and the Silver Jubilee of the Pontificate of His Holiness Pope John Paul II are not only milestones in the life of the Roman Catholic Church, but are also significant events for the international community. I thank the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and the Path to Peace Foundation for inviting me to be part of this Symposium commemorating these two very special events. I also wish to recognise the "Servitor Pacis Award" which will later be bestowed on those who serve humanity where the need is greatest.

I found it particularly enlightening to study the Encyclical once again, and to focus on its premise and message of establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity and freedom. I also reflected on the life of the Holy Father, who by his dedication and good works in the cause of peace for one quarter of a century, has kept alive both the letter and spirit of the Encyclical.

The message that certain conditions have to be met if we are to have peace on earth is as stimulating and instructive today as it was forty years ago. It has caused me to reflect on what it takes to make peace, and to bring peace to our troubled world. So today, drawing extensively on the insight of the Encyclical, I would like to share with you some of my thoughts on this matter.

It is not surprising that, in a world in which the peace is often shattered by conflict and war, and in which graphic pictures of death and destruction come to millions instantaneously through television coverage, too often peace is associated with bringing an end to conflict and war.

The Encyclical, however, focuses our attention more broadly on peace as an overarching concept. This concept encompasses order in society and in the world; attaining human security through the promotion and protection of human rights, including the rights of women; the conduct of relations between states not by force, but through respect for the principles of truth, justice and cooperation; the socio-economic development of all states, whether large or small; and the need for the world community to cooperate to meet these objectives through organisations including the United Nations.

In some respects, our world - the world in which we strive for peace - has and continues to change dramatically. Some of these changes have been for the better. Over the past forty years, we have seen the ranks of the United Nations swell from 112 member states to the 191 it is today, a fitting tribute to the United Nations decolonisation process.

The network of international treaties - standards to which we have agreed - are in our service to guide our conduct nationally, bilaterally and internationally. Globalisation has reached into virtually all corners of the globe, bringing with it the hope of accelerated development for all. We have made tremendous scientific and technological strides, which have advanced the frontiers of human activity in areas as diverse as communications, transportation, and medicine. And we have been able to avert the threat of a third world war.

In other respects, however, our world seems as if it is standing still, or even moving backwards. Reports of widespread violations of human rights, including the rights of women and children, are far too commonplace. Scientific and technological advances are slow in benefiting the people who need them most, and is sometimes more destructive than constructive. Globalisation and trade liberalisation have benefited some, but not all. The preoccupation of most of the corporations driving globalisation is with the greatest profit margin. Too little thought is given to ensuring that those who work to make the profits earn a living wage, let alone the necessity to be good corporate citizens.

The Charter of the United Nations reaffirms faith in nations large and small. However, world attention is generally focussed on the actions and accomplishments of wealthy, influential and militarily advanced states. Regrettably, developing countries tend to come into the picture only when there are social, environmental or political upheavals. Acts of terrorism continue to threaten innocent people the world over. Even as the United Nations seeks to address pressing global problems, and United Nations staff are putting their lives at risk, some dare to say that the world's premier multilateral organisation is irrelevant. And though we may have averted a major world war, we have not been able to free ourselves from the scourge of civil conflict and war.

We live with these challenges to our global society daily. They are brought forcibly home by statistics that paint a grim picture of increasing poverty, an increase in the number of the homeless and of slum dwellers, of people living with deadly disease, including HIV/AIDS, the virtual collapse of the economies of many developing countries, and conflict and war.

Many of my thoughts on what it takes to make peace and to bring peace to a troubled world fit comfortably into the framework of the Encyclical. I believe, for example, that ordering our societies, nations and the international community for the good of the world's people are important foundations on which to build towards a peaceful world.

It is imperative, in doing so, that we promote and protect human rights - civil, political and economic, social and cultural rights - in accordance with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the United Nations Charter and relevant human rights instruments. Respecting the rule of

law and ensuring democracy and good governance that is inclusive will bridge ethnic, religious and other divides, and thus enhance our prospects for peace.

In our world, the economic wealth and scientific and technological advancement of some states is in stark contrast to the faltering progress in many others. We have come to group countries as 'developed', those having the most, and 'developing', those having the least. Further, we have categorised countries as 'least-developed', 'land-locked developing' and 'Small Island Developing States'. It is essential that this categorisation be but recognition of the particular needs of each group of states, and helps us focus on promoting a more equitable development for all states.

The critical relationship between peace and development dictates that we must work cooperatively to remove obstacles to development, be they HIV/AIDS, the illicit traffic in drug or arms, or inequitable trade rules and regulations. We cannot leave some states behind, and their people without hope. We need to ensure human security if there is to be peace in the world.

One of the most significant threats to world peace is terrorism. Terrorists respect neither political borders nor human life. It does not seem to matter much to them that their action retard social and economic development. We must, however, use more than force to deal with terrorism. We need to address the factors driving people to commit such heinous acts. We need not only to convince them that they have an option, but that it is an option they can exercise.

Finding the road to lasting peace amidst conflict and war is one of the most significant challenges for the international community. When we look at the continuing bloody and violent conflict in the Middle East, and countries worldwide that have been in crisis for years, or in which differences are erupting into conflict, the sheer complexity of our task can be daunting. We must find a way to transform conflict and strife into harmony. I believe that the onus is especially on the powerful and influential to make and not to break the peace and on us all to follow the Charter's undertaking to settle disputes by peaceful means.

The Encyclical envisages a strong role for the United Nations in bringing peace, stability and development to our world. Interestingly, it urges the United Nations "to adapt its structures and methods of operation to the magnitude and nobility of its tasks" That part could well have been written today. Reform is difficult in any setting, but, I believe, especially in an organization seeking to harmonise the interests of 191 member states. Yet, we want the United Nations to meet its Charter obligations, and especially, to implement its mandates in the shortest possible time. I truly believe that reform efforts now underway, including those of the Secretary General, must be for the common good of all people.

Above all, It is important for us to recognise the importance of co-operation as a key organising principle in our relations as states - this is recognised in the Encyclical. If nations large and small can work together cooperatively, with equal rights, if none imposes its will on the other, if we recognise the notion of social justice, and if those who have more, will do more, our mutual efforts for the good of all humanity will yield significant results. These are important building blocks for peace.

Thank you.