



PERMANENT MISSION OF THE HOLY SEE
TO THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY
AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

**STATEMENT BY MONSIGNOR MICHAEL W. BANACH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE HOLY SEE,
AT THE 802nd SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

8 APRIL 2010

**RE: ADDRESS BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE
UNITED NATIONS, H.E. BAN KI MOON**

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.

1. The Delegation of the Holy See willingly joins the previous speakers in warmly welcoming H.E. Mr. Ban Ki Moon to the Permanent Council and thanks him not only for his visit, but also for his remarks. The institution he represents seeks to carry forward the founding inspiration to establish a “*centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends*” of peace and development (cf. Charter of the United Nations, Article 1.2-1.4). As Pope John Paul II expressed it in 1995, the Organization should be “*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’*” (Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 50th Anniversary of its Foundation, New York, 5 October 1995, no.14).

2. The founding principles of the United Nations Organization – the desire for peace, the quest for justice, respect for the dignity of the person, humanitarian cooperation and assistance – express the just aspirations of the human spirit, and constitute the ideals which should underpin international relations. As Popes Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI noted on the occasion of their visits to the United Nations, all this is something that the Catholic Church and the Holy See follow attentively and with interest, seeing in the activity of the United Nations an example of how issues and conflicts concerning the world community can be subject to common regulation. This is all the more necessary at a time when we experience the obvious paradox of a multilateral consensus that continues to be in crisis because

it is still subordinated to the decisions of a few, whereas the world's problems call for interventions in the form of collective action by the international community.

Indeed, questions of security, development goals, reduction of local and global inequalities, protection of the environment, of resources and of the climate, require all international leaders to act jointly and to show a readiness to work in good faith, respecting the law, and promoting solidarity with the weakest regions of the planet.

3. As a regional security organization under Chapter 8 of the United Nations Charter, the OSCE has its own rightful place in contributing to the above. I would like to single out two areas that are important for my Delegation. First, the promotion of human rights. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* was the outcome of a convergence of different religious and cultural traditions, all of them motivated by the common desire to place the human person at the heart of institutions, laws and the workings of society, and to consider the human person essential for the world of culture, religion and science. The merit of the *Universal Declaration* is that it has enabled different cultures, juridical expressions and institutional models to converge around a fundamental nucleus of values, and hence of rights. Today, though, efforts need to be redoubled in the face of pressure to reinterpret the foundations of the *Declaration* and to compromise its inner unity so as to facilitate a move away from the protection of human dignity towards the satisfaction of simple interests, often particular interests.

Secondly, human rights, of course, must include the right to religious freedom, understood as the expression of a dimension that is at once individual and communitarian. The activity of the United Nations and the OSCE in recent years has ensured that public debate gives space to viewpoints inspired by a religious vision in all its dimensions, including ritual, worship, education, dissemination of information and the freedom to profess and choose religion. The OSCE has commitments to combat religious intolerance, including the specific commitment to fight intolerance and discrimination against Christians, unique in the international community. It is inconceivable, then, that believers should have to suppress a part of themselves – their faith – in order to be active citizens. The full guarantee of religious liberty cannot be limited to the free exercise of worship, but has to give due consideration to the public dimension of religion, and hence to the possibility of believers playing their part in building the social order.

4. In conclusion, Mister Chair, I would like to assure the Secretary General of the United Nations that, in a manner that is consistent with her contribution in the ethical and moral sphere and the free activity of her faithful, the Catholic Church will continue to work for the realization of these goals through the international activity of the Holy See at the United Nations Organization, as well as at the other international institutions.

Thank you, Mister Chair!