



The Holy See

***LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI
TO MR. MANUEL PEREZ-GUERRERO, SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT***

As the Third United Nations Conference on Trade and Development opens in Santiago, we wish to express to you our profound desire to see the labours of this important Assembly reach a successful outcome in conformity with the hopes that they have rightly inspired.

We know that this desire, which is shared by the individuals and the peoples of the entire world, is mingled with disquiet in the face of the complexity and vastness of the problems upon your agenda as well as in the face of the differing and, at times, divergent positions represented. For our part, with you we wish to place reliance above all upon the aspiration for justice and the sense of brotherhood which are inscribed in the heart of man; in its own field your Conference would offer an opportunity to these sentiments to find authoritative, mature and effective expression.

As at New Delhi in 1968, this Conference is being held against the background of an international crisis in currency, exchange rates and even cooperation for development. The resistance inspired by national interests seems to have grown further. Many economic structures that produce domination have not been corrected through the achievement by nations of political independence; inequalities of income and social conditions are tending to increase both between nations and within certain countries.

Your Conference is aware of the scope and also the limits of the aims to which it so nobly aspires. You are well aware that neither the reform of international trade nor the improvement of aid and cooperation are capable by themselves of ensuring a more united and more human development among peoples. In many cases it is the very structures of power and decision-making that must be altered in order to bring about everywhere, on the political and economic as also on the social and cultural levels, a better sharing of responsibility. Does not justice demand that all peoples, whatever their degree of economic power, should have a real participation in all negotiations of worldwide importance?

It is natural that the Great Powers and the multinational communities should arouse the special expectations of the countries with the least share in the world's wealth. But it is the particular aim of your Conference to provide a forum in which all voices may make themselves heard in the search for solidarity among nations, realism in solutions and fairness in sharing the goods of the earth. We have not failed to note that your programme accords special attention to the lot of the least favoured among the developing countries. It is indeed desirable that UNCTAD should devote itself to the abolition of systems in which the privileged become steadily more privileged, the rich increasingly engage in trade among themselves and international aid itself often benefits only imperfectly the most poverty-stricken people.

In this regard we would wish a hearing to be given to the voice of the most deprived, those millions of men, women and children living on the margin of the modern economy, people who are often the victims of sickness, malnutrition, bad housing and working conditions, underemployment, illiteracy and all the other ills that prevent them from sharing fully in one same human condition.

We send you this message, Mr. Secretary-General, aware of our own responsibilities at the head of a universal Church which desires to march with mankind and to share mankind's lot in the midst of history. The declaration of the latest Synod of Bishops witnesses to this desire and calls for commitment to the service of greater justice both within national communities and on the international level. Be assured that all Catholics and all those who share our common aspiration for an equitable world will follow your deliberations in the conviction that today, to a certain extent, the place of the world is in your hands.

As we invoke abundant divine blessing upon all those taking part in the Third United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Santiago, we pray Almighty God to bring to a successful conclusion their work for the benefit of the whole of mankind.

The Vatican, 7 April 1972.

*ORa n.17 p.3;

Paths to Peace p.241-242.
