



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PAUL VI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ***

Saturday, 25 June 1966

We would like, Gentlemen, first of all to express our gratitude to your illustrious spokesman for the very kind words that he has just addressed to us. He recalled our interest in the activities of the United Nations: we are happy to have the occasion to prove this, once again, by receiving here, at the conclusion of their deliberations, the members of the Second Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme.

We have followed the development of this work in the press. At the inauguration in the Palais des Nations in Milan, His Excellency Amintore Fanfani, in his capacity as President of the twentieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, was gracious enough to recall the similarity between your initiatives and our appeal to all nations, made in Bombay in December 1964. At that time we invited all governments to retain a part of the expenditures set aside for armaments and utilize them for development of less favored areas.

We are thus at liberty to conclude that our humble voice, which seeks to sustain the silent suffering of so many peoples afflicted by famine and the lack of minimal necessities, was not raised in vain. It has found an echo within yourself, an echo rich in promise. As you may well imagine, this is for us a reason for profound satisfaction.

This satisfaction grows when we find that the "aid" to the developing nations has become a "programme," a "programme of the United Nations." Few facts appear to us more worthy of praise and encouragement than this great gesture of world-wide fraternity. We have here a typical example of overcoming narrow political views. We would like to see in it the sign of a civilization which strives to be truly humane and universal. We applaud this act of intellectual and practical courage, which fearlessly faces the many evident obstacles in the organization and conduct of the

programme and those to be found doubtless even among the future beneficiaries.

You will without doubt ask us what is our viewpoint on these efforts. Your question is perfectly legitimate. For it is evident to everybody that a religious society such as the Catholic Church is not founded on economic plans alone and does not pursue any aim of self-interest. Thus, its point of view could not be that of a society with temporal objectives. It does, however, observe and favor, with all the means at its disposal, the progress and well-being of humanity. And when we consider, from the point of view of the Church, efforts such as those you are pursuing, we feel led to a double conclusion.

The first one concerns our duty. What must we do to favour a collective effort like yours, so worthy of support and collaboration? The answer to this first question awakens in us the desire and the taste for generosity. But alas, this only offers us modest means, out of proportion to the depth of the need.

The second conclusion invites us, on the other hand, to consider the work underway, and to discover the principles which inspire it, and the aims to which it aspires. And when we consider it from this point of view, we see our economic poverty giving way to spiritual riches of which, without any merit on our part, we find ourselves holding and distributing. When, in effect, it is a question of the principles and aims of human activity – even if they are foreign to us by reason of their secular and temporal nature – we always have something important to say.

Besides, you yourselves, Gentlemen, are you not the first to realize that when you speak of a "programme", you are not merely political and economic men – i.e. men to study and administer but men of thought, of ideology, of philosophy, we are almost tempted to say men of religion? Are you not, in effect, masters ruling on principles and aims which govern practical programme? This view of the principles and aims is the only one that renders justice to the true sense and the full value of your enterprise. It is the only one which answers the question which may legitimately be asked: why these programmes? Why so much trouble? Where to find the drive, the urge, the force for hope which not only justifies and idealizes the arduous and immense task, but renders it morally and practically possible?

And it is at this point that we feel we are able to insert into your "programme" a contribution which we believe is not useless: the powerful spiritual energy which we derive from the Gospel and which creates in us an immense respect and interest in man, in every man: which makes us recognize him as a brother, and take him to heart with all the great problems he is struggling with and, if he is unhappy and suffering, makes us discover that he has a yet greater right to our love and assistance.

This is the whole meaning of the great document which emerged from the recent Ecumenical Council on "The Church in the Modern World " which expounds in such great depth the help which

the Church wishes to extend to human society today.

If, as we hope, you have carefully read this text, you will have noted that the questions of development have their place. You will have noticed that the great question of peace among men is discussed also at length. And if we were not afraid of infringing upon your patience, we would wish to confide to you certain thoughts on this gift – supreme in a certain sense – to humanity. For it is Peace, finally, to which your activities witness. They do build peace. They are peace in action. We said this in our recent letter to His Excellency U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations; today, "development is the new name of Peace".

This beautiful word peace has always had more than one meaning, more so today than ever. Peace has become, it must be admitted, a propaganda device not always sincere or honest. In certain political and social situations, it is the result of the deprivation of freedom, it has become synonymous with an imposed, oppressive order; peace is also a label for defining balance between opposing forces, contained by fragile agreements or by the accumulation by both parties of ever more dangerous armaments, but peace, finally, has become, thanks to God, your association of peoples, resolved to promote among them orderly, profitable relations for all, without recourse to force, without bloodshed. We honour this kind of peace; this is the kind of peace we hope for.

If we wish this kind of peace to become firm and demonstrate its power of expansion, it is essential that we find a remedy to the great deficiencies still suffered by such a large part of mankind. We must eliminate the all too evident disparities in enjoyment of the benefits of civilization; we must overcome economic systems, perhaps still in force, under which poor people always remain poor and the rich become ever richer.

Your "programme" is endeavoring to apply this remedy and this is why while we are not competent to judge its practical outcome, we recognize your work as being good, useful to civilization and to peace, and worthy of universal solidarity and applaud and encourage it with all our heart.

These are the few words we wanted to say to you. We would like to think that you will accept them as the words of a friend, a counsellor, an "expert on Humanity", as we said during our speech to the United Nations. We would, above all, want you to recognize in our voice the echo of Christ's, the great advocate of the poor and the disinherited, Whom we represent in spite of our unworthiness, and Whose message we interpret: this Christ Who will judge us on the ties of love which will have bound us to our brothers; this Christ Who has promised rewards which are neither small nor mean to those who have shown understanding and a heart toward suffering man.

May these blessings of Christ, of which ours is given as a pledge, descend upon you, Gentlemen, your families and your countries, and enrich your activities so generously devoted to the welfare of mankind.

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