



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL AND
THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION***

Friday, 7 April 2000

Mr Secretary General,

*Distinguished Guests,*¹ It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all on the occasion of the meeting in Rome of the Administrative Committee on Coordination of the United Nations system. Recognizing the work undertaken by your Committee for the good of peoples around the world, I pray that God will give you and all taking part in your meeting the gift of wise discernment in your deliberations. Thank you, Mr Secretary General, for your kind words of presentation, and I am certain that your recent "Millennium Report" will serve as an excellent framework for the Committee's work during these days. As that report makes clear, the millennium just ended has left in its wake a series of unusual challenges. These challenges are unusual not because they are new — there have always been wars, persecutions, poverty, disasters and epidemics — but because the world's increasing interdependence has given them a global dimension, which requires new ways of thinking and new types of international cooperation if they are to be effectively met. At the dawn of the new millennium, humanity has the means to do this. The United Nations, in fact, and the large family of specialized organizations represented by you are the natural forum for developing such a mentality and strategy of international solidarity. In the task of formulating this new perspective, the Administrative Committee on Coordination has a fundamental role to play. It brings together the most senior members of the different specialized agencies, under the direction of the Secretary General, for the express purpose of coordinating the various policies and programmes. This is why your Committee has concentrated its reflections and efforts on the implications of globalization for development, on the socio-economic causes of humanitarian crises and of the persistent conflicts in Africa and other parts of the world, and on the institutional capacity of the United Nations system to respond to new international challenges.² The unbounded expansion of world commerce and the amazing progress in the fields of technology, communications and information exchange are all part of a dynamic process that tends to abolish the distances separating peoples and continents. However, the ability to exercise influence in this new global setting is not the same for all nations, but is more or less tied to a country's economic and technological capacity. The new situation is such that, in many cases, decisions with worldwide consequences are made only by a small, restricted group of nations. Other nations either manage —

often with great effort — to bring these decisions into line with what is in the interest of their citizens or — as happens with the weakest countries — they try simply to adjust to these decisions as best they can, sometimes with negative consequences for their people. The majority of the world's nations, therefore, are experiencing a weakening of the State in its capacity to serve the common good and promote social justice and harmony. Moreover, the globalization of the economy is leading to a globalization of society and culture. In this context, Non-Governmental Organizations, representing a very broad spectrum of special interests, are becoming ever more important in international life. And perhaps one of the best results of their action so far is the awareness which they are creating of the need to move from an attitude of defence and promotion of particular and competing special interests to a holistic vision of development. A case in point is their increasing success in creating a keener awareness in industrialized countries of their shared responsibility for the problems facing less developed countries. The campaign to reduce or cancel the foreign debt of the poorest nations is another example, though not the only one, of a growing sense of international solidarity.³ The growth of this new awareness in society presents the United Nations system with a unique opportunity to contribute to the globalization of solidarity by serving as a meeting place for States and civil society and as a convergence of the varied interests and needs — regional and particular — of the world at large. Cooperation between International Agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations will help to ensure that the interests of States — legitimate though they may be — and of the different groups within them, will not be invoked or defended at the expense of the interests or rights of other peoples, especially the less fortunate. Political and economic activity conducted in a spirit of international solidarity can and ought to lead to the voluntary limitation of unilateral advantages so that other countries and peoples may share in the same benefits. In this way the social and economic well-being of everyone is served. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the challenge is to build a world in which individuals and peoples fully and unequivocally accept responsibility for their fellow human beings, for all the earth's inhabitants. Your work can do much to empower the multilateral system to bring about such international solidarity. The premise of all this effort is the recognition of the dignity and centrality of every human being as an equal member of the human family and, for believers, as God's equal children. The task then is to ensure the acceptance at every level of society of the logical consequences of our shared human dignity, and to guarantee respect for that dignity in every situation.⁴ In this regard, I must express my deep concern when I see that certain groups try to impose on the international community ideological views or patterns of life advocated by small and particular segments of society. This is perhaps most obvious in such fields as the defence of life and the safeguarding of the family. The leaders of Nations must be careful not to overturn what the international community and law have laboriously developed to preserve the dignity of the human person and the cohesion of society. This is a common patrimony which no one has the right to dissipate. Invoking divine guidance upon every effort and undertaking of your Committee in its mission of coordinating the activities of the United Nations system, I pray that your work will be thoroughly pervaded by a generous and ambitious spirit of global solidarity. God bless you, Mr Secretary General, and all who are gathered with you at this meeting!

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