



The Holy See

**MESSAGES OF JOHN PAUL II
TO MR. K.K.S. DADZIE SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT**

1. The next session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development proposes to examine ways of promoting "a healthy, secure and equitable world economy". Although this subject has often been discussed in the past, today it is appropriate to reconsider it in an entirely new spirit because of the profound changes that have taken place in the world in the last five years.

The political upheavals of the last few years have already begun to have effects on the areas of production and trade with which your Conference deals. You are concerned to assess these ever more accurately and to deal effectively with them. Recent events have made clear that the illusion of creating a planned economy which would stifle private initiative cannot be put into practice inasmuch as it violates the fundamental right of peoples to play "the major role in their economic and social development" (*Pacem in terris*, III). The present situation, however, should not be seen merely as the crisis of Marxism, for this crisis "does not rid the world of the situations of injustice and oppression which Marxism exploited and on which it fed" (*Centesimus annus*, n. 26).

2. The disarray of planned economies has aggravated the general crisis of international trade which your Conference has sought to counter for over 25 years, and thus made even more necessary the creation of new bonds of solidarity. But here a second obstacle appears. The bonds which need to be created may not respond to the demands of economic development alone nor may they neglect the social realm. Many current tensions originate in the standstill experienced by a world which is not yet capable of uniting economic objectives and social objectives.

An important shift has taken place in recent years in the very understanding of development, its conditions and its goals. The right to development has become a guiding principle in international relations. It is true that no humanistic definition of development has yet found universal

acceptance, but is this not one of the aims of your meetings: to open new perspectives to people whose profession makes them more immediately concerned with the statistical dimension of international trade? By doing this, you prepare those in positions of responsibility to take the social dimension of the economy into consideration in their planning.

3. One must also consider the obstacles that arise in bringing social concerns to bear upon international trade and in enabling the latter to provide opportunities for human progress for those who are most disadvantaged. What is needed is a profound conversion of attitudes, our contemporaries need to adopt a different way of looking at things. This is in the interest of everyone. It is also a condition for peace. Whether it is a matter of a national economy or of economic relationships between nations, experience demonstrates that a system which does not seek to ensure the improvement of both people's material well-being and their spiritual development cannot survive indefinitely. A meeting such as the one at Cartagena must endeavour to convince both politicians and the public opinion which holds them accountable for their actions that the interests of individuals and peoples prevail over those of the economy, if the earth's abundant resources are to be put at the service of man and of peace.

4. The poverty of certain peoples and the insecurity which is its consequence constitute facts of such gravity that they call for an immediate reaction from all who are in a position to help. Paul VI already in 1967 called attention to the existence of a "great disparity" of situations and the difference in the "freedom of action" enjoyed by various peoples. And he added: "social justice requires that it restore to the participants a certain equality of opportunity" ([Populorum progressio](#), n. 61). These problems are not yet resolved. If some countries have managed to reach the level attained by the older industrialized countries, how many others have been abandoned to extreme poverty! It is immoral to ignore the wall of poverty dividing those who live amid plenty from those who are destitute, for all people are equal in dignity; all must obtain the means of living in truth, freedom and justice; all have the right to count on the solidarity of others. It is an illusion to think that millions of people can be left in situations of hopelessness without one day considering violence as a way to make their voice heard.

Much still remains to be done in order to arrive at greater equity in international relations. But for the peoples of the world, this process will seem to be a new illusion unless they perceive the determination of the richer and more powerful nations to seek tirelessly the surest paths towards justice and solidarity. It is to the honour of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development that it has always been concerned to affirm the ethical dimension of the questions it has addressed.

Well aware of the critical issues with which the Conference must deal, I entrust your work to the Lord of history who "will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity"(Ps 98,9).

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