



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIRST JOINT MEETING  
ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR  
TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA\***

*Thursday, 22 November 1984*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. Less than a year ago, members of both State-owned and private organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, North America and Europe gathered in Dakar for the First Joint Meeting on International Cooperation for Technological Development in Africa, organized by the United Nations Financing System for Science and Technology and the African Regional Centre for Technology. And now, with the collaboration of ENEA, you have assembled in Rome for a second meeting, sponsored by the Department for Cooperation for Development of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by the Ministry of Scientific and Technological Research and by the National Institute for Nutrition, and you have desired on this occasion to meet with the Pope. It is a pleasure for me to welcome you today. And I wish you to know how happy I am to have this opportunity to offer my support and encouragement for the attainment of your important goals. Your collaborative efforts for *the advancement of the peoples of Africa* is a true expression of worldwide fraternal solidarity and concern for justice and peace.

2. During the present meeting, you are focusing your attention on ways *to develop and improve food and energy technologies in Africa*, and especially on how to promote effective international cooperation for the achievement of these aims. In these very days when you are engaged in discussion and planning, millions of our brothers and sisters in Africa, and in Ethiopia in particular, are being threatened with death because of drought and famine. Who cannot recognize the immense value, indeed the vital urgency, of joint efforts to assist them? It is for this reason that I have recently launched a pressing appeal on behalf of those suffering from this terrible scourge of catastrophic proportions. In you and the organization you represent I see a concrete response to

deep human needs. For this, I give thanks to Almighty God, and at the same time I pray that your efforts may inspire many others to make a similar response of fraternal solidarity.

3. Helping to provide food, health care, shelter and other assistance is a true expression of universal human solidarity and respect for the dignity of every human person. For those of us who are Christians, it is a response to the call of God to imitate the love of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Emergency situations such as those presently affecting numerous countries of Africa call for urgent response. They require *immediate and sustained international assistance*. But together with these, there is need for more *long-range programmes of international collaboration*, programmes which promote basic scientific research and its technological application, and which include the economic means to put them into effect. It is in this area most particularly where your meeting can make its greatest contribution.

Nearly twenty years ago, the Bishops of the Catholic Church, gathered at the Second Vatican Council, stated that "advanced nations have a very serious obligation to help developing peoples" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 86). In applying this statement more specifically, they went on to speak of how international cooperation is needed in the area of food production: "Some peoples would greatly better their conditions of life if they could be duly trained to abandon ancient methods of farming in favour of modern techniques. With necessary prudence they should adapt these techniques to their own situations. In addition they need to establish a better social order and regulate the distribution of land with fairness" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 87). Cooperation in the fields of science and technology is one of the most effective means not only of contributing to the physical welfare of peoples but also of fostering the dignity and worth of every person.

4. As men and women engaged in science and technology, you appreciate the great gift which *human intelligence* is for all peoples. Because of its importance it needs to be cultivated with care, and it is necessary that educational opportunities be made available for gifted persons of every nation, especially for the youth. It is also important that every effort be made to ensure that intelligence and learning not become the object of permanent exportation from poor countries to rich ones because the poor countries lack the adequate cultural, scientific and technical environments and institutions to utilize them. A poor country will always remain in a state of inferiority and subjection as long as it is not in a position to carry out basic scientific research and make technological applications in ways adapted to its own cultural, political and economic system. In view of this, it is necessary that the international scientific community not limit its membership to those coming from countries of high technological development, but that it be comprised of people from all the countries of the world, united in a spirit of mutual collaboration.

5. Technological cooperation can pose a serious threat to the culture of developing countries, but it need not be so. And in order to avoid this danger, this cooperation must be carried out in a spirit of fruitful dialogue, one which appreciates the worthy traditions of the peoples concerned and the many different values of each culture. And let us not forget that those nations which are less

developed in the scientific field often much to give from the rich storehouse of their culture to the people of the more advanced nations. Such a *fraternal exchange* enriches all who are engaged in these collaborative efforts.

6. In a spirit of admiration and appreciation, then, I address these words to you today. I assure you of the *encouragement and support* of the Catholic Church for such deserving endeavours of international collaboration. From the cooperation and assistance which you are able to promote, I am confident that there will result a growth in knowledge and integral development, a new spirit of fraternity and peace. May God bless you and strengthen you in your work.

Je voudrais saluer cordialement tous ceux qui se dévouent avec compétence aux tâches complexes du développement technologique en Afrique ou qui y participent dans les autres continents. Je vous adresse mes vœux, ainsi qu'à vos familles, vos collaborateurs et les personnes que vous représentez. Et je prie Dieu de bénir vos efforts pour qu'ils portent tous leurs fruits.

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*\*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. VII, 2 p. 1265-1268.

*L'Osservatore Romano* 23.11.1984 p.5.

*L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n. 52-53 p. 6, 7.

*Paths to Peace* p. 285-286.

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