



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO CARDINAL RENATO RAFFAELE MARTINO
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR
ORGANIZED BY THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE ON
"DISARMAMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE.
PROSPECTS FOR INTEGRAL DISARMAMENT"***

*Venerable Brother
Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino
President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace*

I have great pleasure in sending a cordial greeting to the participants in the International Seminar organized by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on the theme: *"Disarmament, Development and Peace. Prospects for Integral Disarmament"*, and express my deep appreciation of such a timely initiative. I assure you, Your Eminence, and all who are taking part of my spiritual closeness.

The subject on which you are intending to reflect is more topical than ever. Humanity has made formidable progress in science and technology. Human ingenuity has resulted in achievements that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago. At the same time, some areas in the world are still without adequate human and material development; many peoples and people lack the most fundamental rights and freedoms. Even in regions of the world where there is a high standard of living, pockets of marginalization and poverty seem to be spreading. Although the worldwide globalization process has opened new horizons, it has not yet brought the hoped-for results. And although after all the horror of the Second World War the human family gave proof of a great civilization by founding the *United Nations Organization*, today the international community seems at a loss. In various areas of the world tension and war persist, and even where the tragedy of war is not being played out there is nonetheless a widespread feeling of fear and insecurity. Furthermore, phenomena such as terrorism on a world scale make the boundary between peace and war transient, seriously jeopardizing the hope of humanity's future.

How should we respond to these challenges? How can we recognize the "signs of the times"? Joint action is certainly needed at the political, economic and juridical levels, but even before that we need to reflect together on the moral and spiritual level: the promotion of a "new humanism" seems to be ever more urgently necessary in order to enlighten human beings on the understanding of themselves and the meaning of their journey through history. In this regard the teaching of the Servant of God Pope Paul VI and his proposal of an integral humanism, which aims, in other words, "to promote the good of every man and of the whole man", is more timely than ever (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 14). Development cannot be reduced to mere economic growth: it must include the moral and spiritual dimensions. At the same time, an authentic and integral humanism can only consist of solidarity, and solidarity is one of the loftiest expressions of the human spirit; it is one of the natural duties of the human being (cf. Jas 2: 15-16), applicable to both individuals and peoples (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 86); the full development of peace depends on the implementation of this duty. Indeed, when man pursues material well-being alone, remaining absorbed in himself, he bars the way to his own total fulfilment and authentic happiness.

At your Seminar you are reflecting on three interdependent issues: disarmament, development and peace. Indeed, authentic and lasting peace is inconceivable without the development of every person and people; as Paul VI said: "The new name for peace is development" (*Populorum Progressio*, n. 87). Nor is a reduction of armaments conceivable without first eliminating violence at its root, that is, without humankind first being determined to seek peace, goodness and justice. Like any form of evil, war originates in the human heart (cf. Mt 15: 19; Mk 7: 20-23). In this sense, disarmament does not only refer to State armaments but involves every person who is called to disarm his own heart and be a peacemaker everywhere.

As long as there is a risk of offence, States will need to be armed for reasons of legitimate defence, which is a right that must be listed among the inalienable rights of States since it is also connected with the duty of States themselves to defend the security and peace of their peoples. Yet an excessive accumulation of arms does not appear legitimate to us, because "a State may possess only those means necessary to assure its legitimate defence" (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *The International Arms Trade*, Vatican City, 1994, p. 13). Lack of respect for this "principle of sufficiency" leads to the paradox by which States threaten the life and peace of the peoples they intend to defend, and, from being a guarantee of peace, arms for defence risk becoming a tragic preparation for war.

There is a close connection, then, between *disarmament* and *development*. The immense military expenditure, involving material and human resources and arms, is in fact detracted from development projects for peoples, especially the poorest who are most in need of aid. This is contrary to what is stated in the *Charter of the United Nations*, which engages the international community and States in particular "to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources" (Article 26). In fact, in 1964 Paul VI was already asking States to reduce their

military expenditure on armaments and to create a world fund with the amount saved for development projects for the neediest people and peoples (cf. *Message to the World, Entrusted to Journalists*, 4 December 1964). What, however, is being recorded is that the production and trade in arms are constantly growing and are becoming a driving force in the world economy. Indeed, this trend has resulted in civil and military economies overlapping, as is demonstrated by the continuous distribution of goods and knowledge "for a dual purpose", that is, for possible double use: civil and military. It is a grave risk in the biological, chemical and nuclear sectors, where civil programmes can never be assured without a general and complete renunciation of military programmes of confrontation. I therefore renew my appeal to States to reduce their military expenditure on weapons and to consider seriously the idea of creating a world fund to finance projects for the peaceful development of peoples.

A close relationship between development and peace also exists in a double sense. War can in fact break out because of serious violations of human rights, injustice and poverty, but one must not overlook the risk of true and proper "wars of well-being", in other words, wars caused by expansionist ambitions or in order to exercise economic control at the expense of others. Mere material well-being, without a consistent moral and spiritual development, can make man so blind as to incite him to kill his own brother (cf. Jas 4: 1ff.). Today, even more urgently than in the past, the International Community is required to make a decisive option for peace. At the economic level, it is vital to work to ensure that the economy is oriented to the service of the human person, to solidarity and not only to profit. At the juridical level, States are called in particular to renew their commitment to respect the international treaties in force on disarmament and the control of all types of weapons, as well as the ratification and consequent entry into force of the instruments already adopted, such as the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty*, and to the success of negotiations currently underway, such as those on banning cluster bombs, the trade in conventional weapons or fissionable material. Lastly, every effort is required to prevent the proliferation of light, small calibre weapons which encourage local wars and urban violence and kill too many people in the world every day.

It will nevertheless be difficult to find a solution to the various technical issues without man's conversion to goodness at the cultural, moral and spiritual levels. Every person, in any walk of life, is called to convert to goodness and to seek peace in his own heart, with his neighbour and in the world. In this regard the Magisterium of Bl. Pope John XXIII is still valid. He clearly pointed out the objective of *integral disarmament*, saying: "Unless this process of disarmament be thorough-going and complete, and reach men's very souls, it is impossible to stop the arms race or to reduce armaments.... Everyone must sincerely cooperate in the effort to banish fear and the anxious expectation of war from men's minds" (*Pacem in Terris*, 11 April 1963, n. 113 [Vatican Website version]). At the same time, the effect that armaments produce on the human psyche and behaviour should not be ignored. Arms, in fact, tend in turn to increase violence. Paul VI showed his very acute understanding of this aspect in his *Discourse to the United Nations General Assembly* in 1965. He said at their headquarters, where I am preparing to go in the next few days:

"Those weapons, especially the terrible weapons that modern science has given you, long before they produce victims and ruins, cause bad dreams, foster bad feelings, create nightmares, distrust and sombre resolves; they demand enormous expenditure; they obstruct projects of solidarity and useful work; they falsify the very psychology of peoples" (n. 5).

As was said several times by my Predecessors, peace is a gift of God, a precious gift that must also be sought and preserved using human means. It thus requires the contribution of all. A unanimous dissemination of the *culture of peace* and a common *education in peace* are becoming more and more necessary, especially for the new generations for whom the adult generations have grave responsibility. Moreover, emphasizing every person's duty to build peace does not mean neglecting the existence of a true and proper human right to peace. It is a fundamental and inalienable right, indeed, one on which the exercise of all the other rights depends. "Peace is a good so great", St Augustine wrote, "that even in this earthly and mortal life there is no word we hear with such pleasure, nothing we desire with such zest or find to be more thoroughly gratifying" (*City of God*, XIX, 11).

Your Eminence and all of you who are taking part in the Seminar, in turning one's gaze to the concrete situations in which humanity lives today, one might be overcome by a justifiable uneasiness and resignation: in international relations, diffidence and solitude sometimes seem to prevail; peoples feel divided and are at odds with one another. Total war, from being a terrible prediction, risks turning into a tragic reality. Yet war is never inevitable and peace is always possible. Indeed, it is only right! The time has come to change the course of history, to recover trust, to cultivate dialogue, to nourish solidarity. These are the noble objectives that inspired the founders of the United Nations Organization, a real experience of friendship among peoples. Humanity's future depends on everyone's commitment. Only by following an integral and supportive humanism in whose context the question of disarmament takes on an ethical and spiritual nature, will humanity be able to walk towards the desired authentic and lasting peace. It will certainly not be an easy journey and will be subject to dangers, as my venerable Predecessor Paul VI already recognized 30 years ago in his Message to the *First Special Session on Disarmament* of the United Nations General Assembly: "The journey that leads to the construction of a new international order that can eliminate wars and their causes, hence, rendering weapons useless, will not on any account be a brief one" (n. 6). Believers find support in the Word of God that encourages us in faith and in hope, with a view to the definitive peace of the Kingdom of God where "mercy and truth will meet, justice and peace will embrace" (cf. Ps 85[84]: 11). Let us therefore with fervent prayers invoke from God the gift of peace for all humanity. With these sentiments, I renew my congratulations to the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace on having promoted and organized this Meeting on such a delicate and urgent theme. I assure a particular remembrance in prayer for the success of your work and cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all.

From the Vatican, 10 April 2008

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