



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II ON THE OCCASION OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY*

On the significant occasion of the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the foundation of the Organization of African Unity, it gives me great pleasure to extend my warm congratulations and best wishes to the worthy Representatives of the Member States and to all who have the goals of the Organization at heart and collaborate in their achievement.

On many occasions my predecessors and I have expressed our great interest and the concern of the Catholic Church for Africa's peaceful and integral development. The Church earnestly advocates that the entire African continent should proceed along the path of an overall development that embraces the social, political, economic, cultural and spiritual well-being of its peoples. The Church's concern is not limited to the needs of her own members, but, following the example of her Founder and in response to the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, she is fully aware of her calling to be at the service of all men and women, without distinction of race or creed.

The Catholic Church's commitment to the development of the peoples of Africa is not a recent phenomenon, as is witnessed by her long-standing work in favour of local culture and in safeguarding local values, in health care and education, and in so many undertakings, great and small, aimed at social development. In this respect, the Church will not fail to continue along this path, especially through the effective contribution of her African members to the progress of their own countries and to the advancement of Africa as a whole. Living in Africa today, the Church shares in the strains and stresses which are of concern and solicitude to your Organization. How can one remain indifferent to the tensions arising out of situations of injustice, racism, and conflict between opposing ideologies, so alien to the great traditions of tolerance which mark your people's experience? How can one not be saddened by the situations of armed struggle that affect so many areas of the continent, within and between nations? Can one fail to be deeply impressed by the tragic condition of millions of people suffering drought and famine, exposed to sickness and disease, burdened by underdevelopment and lack of employment, forced to become refugees, and bearing the heavy consequences of their country's external indebtedness? In spite of such difficulties, it is important nevertheless not to lose sight of Africa's enormous capacity for advancement. On the basis of the human potential and the resources at its disposal, and with appropriate and effective international solidarity, Africa can look forward to a development truly capable of meeting the needs and aspirations of its peoples. Through the experience gained during the last twenty-five years, the Organization of African Unity can continue to play a substantial role in encouraging and coordinating development and progress. The

commitment, sense of responsibility and confidence in Africa's future on the part of all concerned, which the Organization of African Unity can greatly encourage, are essential ingredients of the better future to which all the peoples of Africa legitimately aspire. The ardent hope that I express on this anniversary occasion is that Africa will be the agent of its own progress; that, free from unwarranted external pressures, and strong in the sense of solidarity and mutual assistance, the Nations of Africa will work together for the common good of all. The Catholic Church for her part gladly supports this goal and will continue to contribute, in the manner proper to her religious and humanitarian mission, to Africa's advancement. To all present at the commemoration ceremonies in Addis Ababa on 25 May 1988 I renew the expression of my friendship and goodwill. *From the Vatican, 19 May 1988.* **IOANNES PAULUS PP.**

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