



# The Holy See

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**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II  
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION\*Friday, 24 April 1987**

*Dear Friends,*

I wish to thank you for the kind sentiments which the Secretary-General, Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar, has expressed on your behalf. I am pleased that this meeting in Rome of the *United Nations Administrative Committee on Coordination* has made possible your presence here today, and I extend to each of you my welcome and cordial greeting.

1. The United Nations Organization, which you serve, has a vital role in today's world. We are all aware that *increasing global interdependence and intercommunication* create an ever greater potential for peace and understanding, but also multiply the risks of wider conflict. Your Organization is uniquely suited to fostering the possibilities for peace and to reducing the dangers created by injustice and aggression. It serves as *a useful forum for discussion and an effective instrument for action*, in promoting the common good of the human family. It owes its very existence to the desire of people of good will for peace, security and the freedom to seek legitimate human development for themselves, their families, and their communities. Each of the agencies and activities you represent was initiated in order to ensure true human progress, that is, progress based on respect for fundamental God-given rights, on mutual cooperation, and on the promotion of justice and peace.

The United Nations Organization deserves praise for its *service to humanity on many levels*. As part of its regular activities, it has drawn international attention in recent years to such issues as poverty, homelessness, human rights, the plight of refugees, the needs of children and of the handicapped, and the contribution of women to society. It has likewise drawn attention to issues related to the spheres of culture, economics, science and public health. Among its many positive achievements I would also mention the Conventions signed last year in Vienna on collaboration in the event of nuclear accidents. Each of the problems just mentioned, and many others as well, can only be remedied by cooperation that transcends national and regional boundaries and interests.

The initiatives of the United Nations are a sign of hope that such cooperation is indeed possible.

As we know so well, *the search for worldwide consensus and cooperation in establishing peace and solving problems is not always an easy one*, given the many social, political and economic differences that mark the human family, and given the constant temptation for individual nations to pursue excessive self-interest at the expense of the greater good of all. For this reason, the work of the United Nations requires patience and perseverance in continuing along the path of cooperation.

2. But there is an even deeper challenge to be faced from within. All those who administer and carry out the programmes of the United Nations must continue to find their *inspiration in the ideals and moral values* upon which it was founded. Only in this way will the Organization *project a sense of purpose* which is a genuine service to; the world community. Only in this way can it maintain *a vision which inspires International trust and co-operation*. The highest standards of personal integrity are required on the part of all. Any falling short would mean sacrificing credibility in the urgent task of promoting ethical solutions to the world's problems.

*The ethical approach is crucial*, for without it one can lose sight of the dignity and rights that belong to every human being. If that dignity is not recognized, and if those rights are not respected, there can be no genuine progress nor any lasting solution to the problems that beset us. For too long in this century *humanity has been conditioned by the clash of competing ideologies and economic interests*, a conflict in which the individual is disregarded or subordinated to profit-making or to ideological concerns. This has been the cause of much division and hatred, of much violence and warfare, and it continues to hamper efforts for justice and peace. The human family has also been profoundly affected by *scientific and technological developments*, and these also raise ethical questions about the nature of progress as it relates to the human person.

3. It is my conviction that at this moment in its history the United Nations Organization faces a twofold challenge: to *overcome ideological competition* and to *foster an ethical approach* to human development and the resolution of social problems. When I speak of the ethical approach, I mean to say that man, and the truly human quality of life which one wishes him to have, should be at the centre of thought and action. Man and his rights: the right to life, the right to a dignified existence, the right to profess his religious beliefs freely, the right to work, and so forth. It is not only a matter of observing certain moral standards in the carrying out of United Nations business and activities, but also of consciously adopting an approach which is recognized as ethical because it is *truly at the service of the individual and respects human dignity and human rights*. The recent publication by the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace of reflections on the International debt question is an attempt to articulate such an approach with regard to a particular problem of pressing concern to all nations.

4. The Catholic Church, whose members come from many different lands and nations, appreciates

the United Nations as well as the magnitude of the problems that call for ethical solutions. For the Church has *a message that transcends human divisions and national boundaries*. She deeply believes in peace. She works for development and progress, while insisting that they are truly human only when they are rooted in the truth of the divine creation and redemption of the world. For these reasons, *the Church is always ready to cooperate* with the United Nations in any worthy initiative which promotes and protects the dignity of the human person and the peace, justice and well-being of all.

I pray that God will bless you and your collaborators in your service to humanity through your work in the United Nations Organization. May he also bless your families and all your loved ones with his grace and peace.

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*\*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. X, 1 p. 1404-1407.

*L'Osservatore Romano* 25.4. 1987 p.4.

*L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n. 17 p. 4, 12.

*Paths to Peace* p. 514-516.

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