



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY TO TANZANIA, BURUNDI,
RWANDA, AND THE IVORY COAST

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
TO THE HEADS OF MISSION AND DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL
ACCREDITED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF TANZANIA***

*State House, Dar-es-Salaam
Saturday, 1 September 1990*

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen, 1. At the outset of my Seventh Pastoral Visit to Africa I have the pleasure of meeting you, *the distinguished Heads of Mission and Diplomatic Personnel* accredited to the Government of Tanzania, as well as *Representatives of International Organizations* present here in Dar-es-Salaam. I thank the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio for the words of welcome spoken on your behalf, and I greet you all with deep sentiments of friendship and esteem. The best recommendation of your calling and the true reason for its prestige lies in your dedicated professional commitment to *fostering understanding and advancing development and peace among the peoples of the world*. The Church likewise has been entrusted by her Divine Founder with a religious and humanitarian mission, different in nature from yours, but open to *many forms of cooperation and mutual support*. Indeed, the presence of the Holy See in the international community corresponds to what might be called a "passion" for the good of the human family - for peace, for the defence of human dignity and human rights, for the integral well-being of individuals and peoples - a "passion" which derives necessarily and perennially from the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and one which I am confident you share. *The Church keenly focuses her attention on the world, the theatre of man's history* (Cfr. *Gaudium et Spes*, 2), where she contemplates the human family struck with wonder at its own discoveries and its power, but at the same time anxious about the current direction of human affairs, and even more fundamentally concerned about the deeper questions of man's role in the universe, about the meaning of his individual and collective strivings, and about the ultimate destiny of the human family itself (Cfr. *ibid.* 3). She wishes to engage men

and women of good will everywhere in conversation about these fundamental problems, offering them the light of the Revelation she has received and of her theological and anthropological reflection. It is in this perspective that I would briefly address *two questions* which have enormous repercussions for the peoples of Africa.² The first of these questions arises out of a dramatic statistic. It is generally accepted that there are some *five million refugees in Africa, as well as some thirteen million displaced persons*. Thus, millions of our brothers and sisters are homeless and in exile, deprived of dignity and hope. Some are the victims of natural calamities, but *most are the innocent victims of ethnic conflict, power struggles, or of failed development policies*. This immense human tragedy generally has a weaker hold on worldwide public opinion than many other causes and crises around the planet. For this reason I cannot fail to take this opportunity of reminding you and the Governments you represent that the situation cries out for urgent intervention on the part of the international community, in order to help these people not only to survive, to feed themselves, to receive medical assistance and health-care, but also to live useful and respectable lives and to maintain their hopes of a better future for themselves and their children. Countries in Africa or Asia with a large influx of refugees are hardly in a position to do this by themselves. We all agree that the more favoured nations and the international organizations involved in aid to refugees are doing much, for which they are to be credited. But *much, much more is needed*, and repeated appeals to the conscience of those in a position to do more are necessary, especially in view of the dwindling resources being directed to this goal. Our host country Tanzania is one such receiving country which has sought to provide for refugees from surrounding areas, using its own badly needed resources, and therefore making itself deserving of support from the international community in this respect. The *immediate humanitarian aspect* of the whole question *calls for an equally immediate and generous response* on the part of the more developed nations.³ At the same time, the complex nature of the whole problem of refugees and displaced persons points clearly to the need for action on many other fronts if the situation is to improve. The root causes can be attacked only if there is *growth in the pacification and democratization of African life*, with increased participation of all groups in a representative and juridically safeguarded ordering of public life. A great effort is needed to raise the level of education so that many more people can play a responsible role in determining the economic, social and cultural policies to be followed. A consciousness of human dignity and human rights must be promoted. Dialogue and negotiation must take the place of conflict in the resolution of tensions. More and more, the peoples of Africa are becoming convinced that they must be the builders of their own destiny. The developed nations, for their part, having overcome the temptation to look at Africa merely as a resource to be used for their own advantage, must surely realize that it is in everyone's interest to see this continent develop into a capable and vigorous partner in economic and cultural exchanges.

All of this requires that the interdependence of peoples and countries be recognized as *a moral category, whose correlative response is a solidarity* which is not just well-meaning kindness and compassion - which have their rightful place in human relations - but a firm and persevering *determination to work for the common good* of the entire human family (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38). The basis of such an attitude of solidarity is the conviction that all are

responsible for all, that is, everyone is bound by a universal moral imperative to recognize others as holders of equal human rights as oneself and deserving of equal treatment. What applies to individuals applies also to nations: the stronger and richer nations must have a sense of moral responsibility for the other nations, so that *an international system may be established which will rest on equity for all peoples* and on the necessary respect for their legitimate differences (Cfr. *ibid.* 39). The question of refugees and displaced persons is one dramatic instance which calls into play *the moral responsibility of the international community*. Ladies and Gentlemen, let us work together for the proper response: the Church in her field, educating her members in the *religious* foundation of their duties and encouraging them in the generous and selfless service of their brothers and sisters in need; you, as diplomats and representatives of international agencies, doing your utmost to foster an adequate response to the plight of so many millions of human beings, and above all working for a new international order based on the highest moral principles of responsibility, justice and brotherhood.⁴ The other question about which I wish to speak briefly also underlines the reality of global interdependence. *The drama of AIDS threatens not just some nations or societies, but the whole of humanity*. It knows no frontiers of geography, race, age or social condition. This epidemic, unlike others, is accompanied by a unique cultural unease related to the impact of the symbolism it suggests: the life-giving functions of human sexuality, and the blood which epitomizes health and life itself, have become a roadway to death. Only a response that takes into account both the medical aspect of the illness, as well as the human, cultural, ethical and religious dimensions of life can offer *complete solidarity* to its victims and raise the hope that the epidemic can be controlled and turned back. The AIDS epidemic calls for a supreme effort of international cooperation on the part of Governments, the world medical and scientific community, and all those who exercise influence in developing a sense of moral responsibility in society. The threat is so great that indifference on the part of public authorities, condemnatory or discriminatory practices towards those affected by the acquired immuno-deficiency virus, or self-interested rivalries in the search for a medical answer to this syndrome should be considered forms of collaboration in this terrible evil which has come upon humanity. The members of the Church will continue to play their part in caring for those who are suffering, as Jesus taught His followers to do (Cfr. *Matth.* 25, 36), and in *promoting prevention that is respectful of the dignity of the human person and his transcendent destiny*. The Church is convinced that without *a resurgence of moral responsibility and a reaffirmation of fundamental moral values* any programme of prevention based on information alone will be ineffective and even counterproductive. More harmful still are campaigns which implicitly promote - through their lack of moral content and the false security which they offer - the very patterns of behaviour which have greatly contributed to the expansion of the disease.⁵ Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I have spoken of refugees and the sick, two categories of people among the most needy on this planet. Our individual and collective concern for them is a definite measure of our humanity, taken in the loftiest sense of the word. As a brother in our common humanity, I appeal to you to use whatever influence you have to direct the world's efforts and resources to promoting the true well-being of the human family. A new age of development and solidarity, guided not by selfishness but by profound and convinced respect for human dignity and human rights, is *the great opportunity and*

challenge which the changed world situation allows us to envision and confront. May God grant the leaders of peoples the wisdom and goodness which the hour requires. God bless you and your families, and the countries you represent. Thank

you!

*AAS 83 (1991), p.209-213.*Insegnamenti* XIII, 2 pp.372-376.*L'Osservatore Romano* 5.9.1990 p. III.*L'Osservatore Romano. Weekly Edition in English* n.36 pp.1, 2.