



The Holy See

***DISCOURS DU SAINT-PÈRE JEAN-PAUL II
AUX PARTICIPANTS À UNE RENCONTRE ORGANISÉE
PAR LE «BUREAU EUROPÉEN DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT»****

Vendredi 7 juin 1996

Dear Friends,

1. On the occasion of the meeting of delegates of the non-governmental organizations of Europe and the Mediterranean Basin on the topic of fiscal re-form and the environment, which is taking place in Rome, I am pleased to welcome you. I cordially greet Mr. Armando Montanari, President of the European Bureau for the Environment, whom I thank for his kind words, and Mr. Raymond Van Ermen, Secretary General.

At the time when we are celebrating World Day of the Environment in the perspective of Habitat II, the United Nations Conference which is currently being held in Istanbul, your reflection addresses a review of the issues concerning lasting human development and interreligious dialogue in the area surrounding the Mediterranean.

2. As I said at the time of the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development four years ago, modern man is led to ask a fundamental question which can be described as both ethical and ecological. How can accelerated development be prevented from turning against man? How can one prevent disasters that destroy the environment and threaten all forms of life, and how can the negative consequences that have already occurred be remedied?

The Catholic Church continues to be attentive to the maintenance and protection of the environment as well as to problems concerning development, in accordance with her own anthropological viewpoint, shared by people of goodwill and by noble religious traditions. The environment and development both involve the human person, the centre of creation. Economic and political decisions regarding the environment must therefore be made to serve individuals and

peoples.

Man's vocation is to "cultivate" and subdue the earth which God has entrusted to him. Among creatures, he is the only being who is responsible for the consequences of his action, not only for himself but also for future generations for whom we must prepare a habitable world. No one can claim the goods of the earth for himself. As Ambrose of Milan said, "the fruitfulness of all the earth must be fruitfulness for all» (De Nabuthe, 7, 33).

3. In the social domain this truth must be expressed by the firm will to live and act in solidarity with our brothers and sisters, with a view to the common good. It is impossible for a single person or group to determine their own needs with regard to the environment, while ignoring the rest of humanity. Indeed, it is more than obvious today that the way we treat nature has consequences for our earth as a whole. Education in international solidarity and respect for the environment is urgently needed today.

Human beings, individually and collectively, are more than ever responsible for the future of the globe, for the glory of God and the good of creation. One cannot fail to appreciate the awareness of the local, national and international civil authorities and their concern for dialogue and cooperation in building a truly habitable rural and urban environment, without failing to preserve the necessary space for families, places of worship and human formation. I hope that the participants in the Habitat I Conference will find suitable response to guarantee man's basic material need without forgetting, however, the cultural and spiritual dimensions. Creativity and a sense of solidarity and responsibility should be fostered in order to create "living spaces" where people, children and families can achieve their best, because for his well-being and growth, the human being is deeply affected by his habitat.

4. In this spirit, I encourage you to pursue the service you are carrying out with our contemporaries, in order to create an ever more human world, as I hope your meetings will be crowned with success. I willingly grant my Apostolic Blessing to you all, to your colleagues and to those who are dear to you.

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