



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF GAMBIA*

Thursday, 15 June 1978

Mr President,

It is a pleasure for us to receive Your Excellency today, following your visit to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, in your capacity as Chairman of the Heads of State Conference of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel. At the same time we are happy to greet the distinguished members of your suite, from your own country of The Gambia, and from Mali, Senegal and Upper Volta.

Your journey to the United States and Western Europe has been dictated by the continuing grave problem of drought in the Sahel, a problem that, as you have mentioned, preoccupies the Holy See, which has been able, within the limits of its possibilities, to offer assistance towards the relief of the sufferings of the peoples of the region. We are aware that the aim of your tour is to bring the problem more vividly to the attention of the competent authorities and Organizations, and we would assure you that our prayers go with you in your worthy endeavours. With regard to the Catholic Church's on-the-spot efforts, we may mention that only a few days ago there took place in Ouagadougou an international meeting of representatives of the Churches of the Sahel. The aim was to review what contribution the Churches in the various countries have been able to make during recent years, and to discuss future concerted projects not only for combatting the ever-present menace of drought but also for favouring the long-term development of the countries involved.

Be assured also that the Holy See and the Catholic Church will always be allied with all initiatives, such as your own, that aim at assisting people in their urgent basic needs, and in promoting the human dignity of all the children of God.

As we reiterate our good wishes for your mission, we cannot fail to express our cordial pleasure at the fact that the Holy See and the Republic of The Gambia have just decided to establish diplomatic relations. This new and more intimate connection between the Holy See and your country will, we trust, lead to even greater and more fruitful cooperation in years to come.

Mr President, we close by invoking upon you and your colleagues in your present mission the abundant assistance of Almighty God.

**Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, vol. XVI, p.471-472;*

OR 16.6.1978, p.1;

ORa n.26 p.2.