



The Holy See

**LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO H.E. Dr JAVIER PÉREZ DE CUELLAR
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION ***

*To His Excellency
Dr Javier Pérez de Cuellar
Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization.*

This year marks the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the establishment of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations. In writing to you, Mr Secretary-General, I wish not only to commemorate that important date, but also to reaffirm the importance which the Holy See and the Catholic Church attribute to the United Nations Organization.

It was in 1964 that my predecessor, Paul VI, chose to establish an *ad hoc* Mission to the United Nations. He did this in light of new orientations that were taking place within the Church, and in response to the appreciation which the international community had long manifested with regard to the Holy See's efforts in favour of peace and solidarity among the nations. By sending an Observer to your Organization, he intended to demonstrate the Holy See's concern for all initiatives aimed at promoting the human, social, cultural, political and moral growth of the community of nations. He likewise desired to make the Church's contribution more effective within the United Nations' deliberations on matters of world concern.

Of course the Holy See had often in former times contributed to discussions aimed at a deeper understanding of problems connected with the moral order, such as aid to the needy and issues of peace. But it had done so only through extraordinary interventions, whereas the establishment of a permanent Office resulted obviously in a more significant presence.

Pope Paul's convictions would soon be confirmed by the Second Vatican Council which invited the entire Church to cooperate in the building up of the international community: "In pursuit of her

divine mission, the Church preaches the Gospel to all men and dispenses the treasures of grace. Thus, by imparting knowledge of the divine and natural law, she everywhere contributes to strengthening peace and to placing brotherly relations between individuals and peoples on solid ground” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 89). The same Council also affirmed that: “to encourage and stimulate cooperation among men, the Church must be thoroughly present in the midst of the community of nations” (*Ibid.* 4).

As you are aware, Mr Secretary-General, the Permanent Mission of the Holy See has participated in the life of the international community throughout these past twenty-five years. It has done so while maintaining its status as an Observer. This status allows it an active presence, while safeguarding its ability to maintain the stance of universality which its very nature demands. As a result, it has become a point of reference for both the spiritual and the temporal spheres, since each in its own specific way strives for the same objectives (Cfr. Ioannis Pauli PP. II *Allocutio in Palatio Nationum Unitarum ad earundem Nationum Legatos habita*, die 2 oct. 1979: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, II, 2 [1979] 522 ss.).

During the past quarter of a century, the Holy See has closely followed the difficult journey which the United Nations Organization has undertaken. It has shared the joy of its many noteworthy successes, as well as the pain and anxiety caused by the many breaches of peace and obstacles to progress which it has had to face throughout this period.

The United Nations has very rightly assumed the task of drawing the world’s attention to the urgent problems and issues which confront mankind, particularly those involving regional conflicts, the environment, illegal drugs, and the rights of women, children, the homeless and the handicapped. By its concerted efforts, the Organization has frequently brightened the most menacing horizons with new hope and a sense of security. This rapidly expanding role was recently recognized in the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces.

On this occasion, may I repeat, Mr Secretary-General, what I stated in my letter to you of April 6, 1982, concerning the readiness of the Holy See to offer its full cooperation to the United Nations Organization in those areas which are in harmony with the Church’s specific mission, and in particular in those matters which relate to peace and justice, human rights and the alleviation of poverty.

Given the undisputed commitment of the United Nations to those areas, and conscious of the Church’s concern for the good of all, I am happy to recall the words spoken by Pope Paul VI in his memorable discourse of October 4, 1965, in which he referred to the United Nations as “the obligatory path of modern civilization and of world peace”. Echoing this conviction, and with renewed good wishes for your efforts on behalf of the peoples of the world, I invoke upon you, Mr Secretary-General, and upon all who strive for this peace which is the fruit of justice, the blessings

of the Almighty.

From the Vatican, May 15, 1989.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

*AAS 81 (1989), p. 1329-1331.

Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II, vol. XII, 1 p. 1259-1261.

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