



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATION
SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICTS***

To Mr. Olara A. Otunnu

Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Organization

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts

On the occasion of the Symposium *Children in Armed Conflicts: Everyone's Responsibility* being held at the United Nations Headquarters on June 5, 2001, and organized with your Office by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See, I send cordial greetings to you and all taking part, and I assure you of my prayerful solidarity.

The theme of the Symposium draws much-needed attention to the sad plight of countless children who are victims of war in various parts of the world. The memory of those who have been killed and the continuing tribulations of so many others compel us to spare no effort to bring such conflicts and wars to an end, and to do everything possible to help their young victims return to a healthy and dignified life. In this regard, the United Nations Organization, together with other humanitarian and religious organizations, have been working tirelessly to relieve these inhuman sufferings. They deserve our gratitude, support and encouragement.

Children and young people are "precious members of the human family, for they embody its hopes, its expectations and its potential" (*Message for the World Day of Peace 1996*, No. 9). The challenge facing individuals and organizations, indeed the entire international community, is to ensure that children everywhere are given the possibility of growing up in peace and happiness. Then they too will become peacemakers, builders of a world of fraternity and solidarity.

With these thoughts, I pray that this important Symposium will lead to a greater awareness of the seriousness of the problems of children in situations of armed conflict. Upon all taking part I invoke abundant divine blessings.

From the Vatican, May 30, 2001.

JOHN PAUL II

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