



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI
TO THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN
THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY ANTE THE AFRICAN COUNTRIES***

Friday, 1 February 1974

You are welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen, and we are honoured to receive the participants in the Parliamentary Conference of the Association between the European Economic Community and the Associated African States, Madagascar and Mauritius. Yes, this meeting of two continents, at the level of those who are qualified to discuss the political and economic trend of their country, takes on deep significance. It seems to us to express, prepare and carry out already, to some extent, the broad organic cooperation we have so often called for.

We take care not to judge the technical means, the elements of conventions that must assure this cooperation or bring about its progress. But we remain firmly convinced that countries cannot act in isolation today, with the partner of their choice, without considering those to whom they are bound in natural solidarity. The need is felt more and more to incorporate the bilateral or multilateral agreements in a programme of world collaboration, as we expressed the wish in our encyclical '*Populorum progressio*' (cf. n. 52). In this plan of world collaboration, the relations between the European Community and the whole of Africa can appear as a privileged stage brought about by proximity helping one another, and the multiple cultural, economic and religious bonds that connect the two continents and which, thank God, have left the stage of dependency behind. And you, Members of Parliament, you can do a great deal to promote mutual knowledge of problems, study them together, create an atmosphere of trust, drive home to the public opinion of your countries and your governments the urgency of this solidarity, in short, prepare the conditions without which agreements would be illusory.

We have already, over eight years ago, paid tribute to such a delegation, Today the situation makes your work even more useful. For the circumstances are serious on both sides. The obstacles that Africa is meeting with on its way to full development, the energy crisis, the monetary

and economic problems of Europe, make it even clearer that closed national economies, which are self-sufficient, can no longer exist. The nations are becoming more aware of their possibilities and their limits, and are in search of new ways.

How shall we act in this historic moment? In view of the hardness of the times, some people may be tempted to withdraw within themselves or fall back on powerful friends to solve their own problems in the first place. They will also think it impossible to develop the solidarity that has begun to take shape, by adding to the sacrifices, already very heavy ones, that have to be made today. It is true that the situations are often delicate. But the fundamental questions cannot be avoided for this reason: can we really give weight to the reduction of some people's comfort when the lives of others are at stake? Will the poor bear the cost of this situation, finding themselves poorer than ever? The pursuit of profit alone, overproduction, and overconsumption, must not constitute the aim of society. They do not ensure essential human values.

We wish to believe, on the contrary, that this moment will be the moment of wisdom: the one of courage and creativity, the one, perhaps, of accepted austerity among the better off; the one, above all, of more intense cooperation among European countries, among African countries, and between both continents, to the benefit of all. We must struggle against discouragement, shake off our narrow perspectives, believe that solidarity is possible, that it alone offers a long-term human solution. Is it not time to invent new types of relations between the developed and the developing countries? Yes, we hope that this year, when many trade agreements are to be revised, will hasten the establishment of renewed conventions, really fair ones, respectful of the dignity of the partners and on equal terms.

And we must add if reasons of economic interest, even if reciprocal and well understood, may be a stimulus, they cannot suffice. History shows, on the contrary, that purely economic perspectives lead to an impasse. Deeper mutual help is necessary, based on a consideration of everything that makes up the riches and honour of the partners, of their real needs. In short, we wish also for cultural ties, spiritual ties and let us say the word, friendly ties. A certain common destiny must be lived now on the scale of continents, and the Association you represent must contribute, it seems to us, to serving it.

Those among you who share our Christian faith will remember the words of the Apostle John: "And now, suppose that a man has the worldly goods he needs, and sees his brother go in want; if he steels his heart against his brother, how can we say that the love of God dwells in him'," (*1 Jn* 3, 17). May we be able to say with him: "Remember that we have changed over from death to life, in loving the brethren as we do" (*ibid.* 3, 14), The Creator calls all men to widen their heart to the new horizons he opens up to them. He invites us to do everything in our power in order that greater justice may reign among men. We beg Him to assist you in your efforts of collaboration and to bless your persons with all those who are dear to you.

*ORa n.7 p.4.

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