



THE HOLY SEE
Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting
“Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia and Hate Crimes Through
Educational and Awareness-Raising Initiatives”
Session 2: Challenges in Combating Hate Crimes, Racism and Xenophobia:
Role of Awareness-Raising Initiatives and Public Discourse
Friday, November 11, 2011

Mr. Chairman,

1. The fight against racial discrimination and xenophobia is, above all, about how we wish to structure the interaction of individuals and peoples. Racism is a sin. It is fundamentally a lie, a concept deliberately invented to create division in humanity. Our deliberations must be about the truth: the truth concerning human dignity, the truth concerning the fundamental unity of the human family.

2. Despite this contemporary period of unprecedented humanitarian and scientific progress, all too many dimensions of our world community are still marked by exclusion, division and crass inequality, with consequent dramatic human suffering. Nor can we forget that the recent past has witnessed actions aimed not only at exclusion but at the very extermination of entire peoples. The challenge of our generation is to ensure that this will never happen again, and to draw up, as it were, a new world map, one which registers not division or domination, but a fruitful interaction of peoples founded on equitable, just and fraternal relations in solidarity.

3. One of the best ways to raise awareness in fighting racism and xenophobia is to have the courage to begin to touch the most central and the deepest dimensions of what is needed to fight racial discrimination and to build a more just world. Each of us, as individuals and as representatives of nations and peoples, is invited to examine the sentiments that are in our own hearts. Without an individual and collective conversion of heart and attitude, the roots of hatred will not be eliminated, and racism and xenophobia will continue to raise its ugly head again and again.

This is not an easy process. It requires that we examine the reality of history, not in order to be trapped in the past, but to be able to begin honestly to construct a different future. The late Pope John Paul II noted: “One cannot remain a prisoner of the past: individuals and peoples need a sort of ‘healing of memories’” (Message for World Day of Peace, 1997). Evidently there can be no such healing without a vigorous recognition of the truth of historical realities. Only in this way can we truly raise awareness. The healing of memory requires that we honestly appraise our personal, community and national history and admit those less noble aspects which have contributed to the marginalization of today, but in such a way as to reinforce our desire to make the era of globalisation an era of encounter, inclusion and solidarity.

Thank you, Mister Chairperson.