



POPE BENEDICT XVI

UK Ministerial Delegation's Visit To The Holy See

14-15 FEBRUARY 2012

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE HOLY SEE AND HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

On 14-15 February 2012 the Secretary for the Holy See's Relations with States, Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, hosted talks between the Holy See and a British Government Ministerial delegation led by the Rt Hon Baroness Warsi. The visit of the delegation to Rome follows the successful visit of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in September 2010, and marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and the Holy See, which took place the year of the visit of Pope John Paul II to Britain, the first by a reigning Pontiff.

The delegation also met the Secretary of State His Eminence Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, and was received by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI.

The Holy See and Her Majesty's Government agreed on the urgent need for action to strengthen the universal commitment to religious freedom as a fundamental human right, and to its practical application with a view to promoting respect for all religions in all countries. The Holy See and the British government look forward to working together to combat intolerance and discrimination based on religion, wherever it is manifest.

The Holy See and Her Majesty's Government reaffirmed the need to promote integral and sustainable global development, based on the centrality of the human person and grounded in the principle of the inherent human dignity and worth of each person. Much progress has been made over the last decade in improving health and well-being for many people. However, there are still significant gaps and challenges in the long and complex path towards ensuring integral human development for everybody. Too many people are still hungry, too many people do not have access to education and to decent work, too many women die in childbirth. In view of these challenges we recognise a shared obligation to achieve a fair international financial and trade framework. And we will strive for a better future for all humanity, taking into particular account care for the poorest people in the world.

Looking ahead to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development at Rio de Janeiro in June this year and to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change implementation process, we share the conviction that in order to take forward a human-centred and sustainable global development, there is a need to continue to strengthen the integration of its interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars: the economic, the social and the environmental, as well as the connection between combating poverty and tackling climate change.

The Holy See and Her Majesty's Government share a commitment to work at the United Nations and other fora to strengthen the international focus on conflict prevention, disarmament, arms control and non proliferation, aimed at protecting human life and building a world more respectful of human dignity. As part of this effort, we look forward to positive outcomes in July to the final negotiations to agree upon a robust Arms Trade Treaty with a wide scope, and to the 2nd Review Conference of the UN Programme on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

With regard to the changes which have occurred in North Africa and the Middle East, the Holy See and Her Majesty's Government stressed the importance of undertaking real reforms in the political, economic and social realms, in order better to ensure the unity and development of each nation, in responding positively to the

legitimate aspirations of many people for peace and stability. In this context, reference was made to the role which Christians can play and to the importance of interreligious dialogue. The Holy See and Her Majesty's Government expressed the hope for a resumption of negotiations in good faith between Israelis and Palestinians so as to bring about a lasting peace. They renewed their appeal for an immediate end to violence in Syria and stressed the need for co-operation to overcome the present crisis and work towards a harmonious and united coexistence.

As the London Conference on Somalia approaches, the Holy See and the British Government encourage the international community to support a coherent strategy on Somalia in order to end the crisis there, placing as a priority the protection and welfare of the people of the Horn of Africa.

Her Majesty's Government welcomed His Holiness Pope Benedict's support for the ongoing process of reconciliation in Northern Ireland, the establishment of stable, inclusive political institutions, and efforts to build a peaceful, stable and prosperous future for all parts of the community. Her Majesty's Government and the Holy See agreed that the use of violence for political ends is deplorable, and must be set aside in favour of constructive dialogue for the well-being of the whole community.

As the United Kingdom prepares to host the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, and to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, both sides look forward to a year characterised by the spirit of the Olympic Charter and the Olympic Truce: at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

There was in addition a good exchange of views on a wide range of social, economic, political and cultural issues, including on developing the UK's collaboration with the Vatican Museums. Both sides recognised in particular the role of faith and education in the development of a culture of social responsibility and the underpinning of a healthy society. In this context, appreciation was expressed for the significant contribution which the Catholic Church, and Christians in general, have made and continue to make to the good of British society. The Holy See emphasised the need to ensure that institutions connected with the Catholic Church can act in accordance with their own principles and convictions and stressed the necessity of safeguarding the family based on marriage, religious freedom and freedom of conscience. Both sides look forward to further strengthening their relationship by working together through their respective networks and global partnerships, including the Commonwealth of Nations, to promote the common good.