



Remarks by H.E. Archbishop Gabriele Caccia
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
**“Harmony in a World in Crisis. Working together to achieve
peace, gender equality, mental health, and environmental
preservation”**

New York, 3 February 2023

Excellencies,
Reverend Religious Leaders,
Distinguished participants,
Dear friends,

At the outset, I would like to thank the Permanent Missions of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Belize and Bahrein, as well as their partners, for organizing this event during the World Interfaith Harmony Week, and inviting our Mission to share some reflections.

In this context, I would like to quote a passage from Pope Francis address to the diplomatic Corps at the beginning of January: *Religion provides genuine opportunities for dialogue and encounter between different peoples and cultures. The Timor-Leste Parliament bore witness to this in its unanimous decision to approve the Document on Human Fraternity that I signed with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar in 2019 and by including the Document in the programmes of the nation’s educational and cultural institutions. I was able to experience this personally during my visit to Kazakhstan last September on the occasion of the Seventh Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, with whom I shared a number of concerns about today’s world and saw first-hand that religions are “not a problem, but part of the solution for a more harmonious life in society”. [11] Equally significant was my visit to Bahrain, where a further step forward was taken in the journey of Christian and Muslim believers.*¹

¹ Pope Francis, Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, Rome, 9 January 2023.

In these very days, we are witnessing how Pope Francis is giving a major contribution towards reconciliation and peace in His Apostolic Journey to the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan.

In a world that is witnessing heightened divisions and wars, the creation of a culture of peace is not an easy task: From where can we start? Pope Francis in his address to the diplomatic community, sketched a response taking up some elements of *Pacem in Terris*, the encyclical letter issued by Pope John XXIII sixty years ago at the time of the Cuban missile crisis, and addressed to “all men of good will”, which provides valuable insights to answer this challenging question. According to it, “peace is possible in respect for four fundamental goods: truth, justice, solidarity and freedom.”²

First, a peace grounded in truth requires the recognition and respect of human dignity: *each human being is a person, possessed of a nature endowed with intelligence and free will. As such, he or she has rights and duties which together flow as a direct consequence of his or her nature. These rights and duties are universal and inviolable, and therefore altogether inalienable.*³ The political community can pursue the common good and enables the integral human development only when it respects the human person with his or her “right to life and physical integrity and guarantees his or her freedom in investigating the truth” creating an environment that offers each person the possibility of truly exercising human rights and freedoms and of fulfilling completely the corresponding duties.⁴

Second, building peace requires pursuing justice, overcoming indifference and encouraging working together in many praiseworthy initiatives that aim at reducing poverty, assisting migrants, combatting climate change, promoting nuclear disarmament, and providing humanitarian aid.⁵ Justice in the social sphere also demands that disputes are settled according to the laws. However, they must not be based upon a utilitarian view of justice. Rather, they must correspond to the dignity of the human person and to what is required by right reason.⁶

¹ Pope Francis, Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps Accredited to the Holy See, Rome, 9 January 2023.

² Ibidem

³ Cfr. Pope John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, 9

⁴ Cfr. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 389.

⁵ Cfr. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 389.

⁶ Cfr. Pope John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, 282-283.

⁷ Cfr. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 398.

Third, peace is the fruit of solidarity, both as a social principle and a moral virtue, that goes beyond few sporadic acts of generosity. It presumes the creation of a new mindset which thinks in terms of community⁷ and which translates into actions to achieve the common good: “that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”⁸

Finally, peace rests upon freedom, which can be fully exercised when certain economic, social, juridic, political and cultural conditions are met. At the same time, the meaning of freedom cannot be restricted to an individualistic, arbitrary and uncontrolled exercise of personal autonomy, as it truly exists “where reciprocal bonds, governed by truth, justice [and solidarity], link people to one another.”⁹

Excellencies, distinguished participants,

Almost eighty years ago, we, “the peoples of the United Nations”, committed ourselves to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and, for this end, to practice acceptance, mutual respect and live together in peace. Since then, the United Nations “has made a notable contribution [in...] preparing the cultural and institutional soil for the building of peace.”¹⁰

In this endeavor, as Pope Francis said, *religion provides genuine opportunities for dialogue and encounter between different peoples and cultures.*

It is my sincere hope that this event will be an opportunity to advance truth, justice, solidarity and freedom to achieve a true peace, founded on a correct understanding of the human person.

Thank you.

⁸ Cfr. Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Evangelii Gaudium*, 188.

⁹ Cfr. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 193.

¹⁰ Cfr. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Libertatis Conscientia*, 26.

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, Message for the 2004 World Day of Peace, 7.