

## Holy See Wary of Ambiguity in UN Conventions

### Official Explains Why Delegation Holds Out on Signing

VATICAN CITY, FEB. 2, 2009 (Zenit)

The Holy See will not lend its support to U.N. conventions that hide a defense of abortion and same-sex marriage under a cover of legitimate rights, explained a Holy See representative.



Archbishop Celestino Migliore, permanent observer of the Holy See at the United Nations, spoke about recent conventions the Holy See has not signed in an interview with the Italian Catholic magazine "Il Regno." The archbishop was responding to criticism in the press of Vatican positions on two U.N. proposals: one dealing with disabled persons and the other with homosexuals.

In regard to the convention on persons with disabilities the prelate said that "while recognizing the importance and urgency of putting many of its aspects into practice, the Holy See abstains from signing it because the text lends support to abortion as a form of so-called reproductive health."

The Holy See delegation worked to bring the convention in line with a true defense of human rights, he said, but without success.

In the negotiation phase, the delegation pointed to the ambiguity of the wording, asking "not that it be deleted but made precise once and for all so that it would exclude abortion from among the possibilities of its interpretation," Archbishop Migliore noted.

But, he continued, the request was not accepted and it was contended that the text "did not intend to create new rights, but only to guarantee that persons with disabilities were not permitted anything less than what is permitted to every person" -- a point on which "the Holy See was in perfect agreement."

The intensification of pressure from abortion supporters for the blocking of the [Holy See's] proposal made it clear that "at stake was not only the protection of disabled persons -- which

was fully expressed in the Holy See's proposal -- but the use of this convention to advance a discourse that, among other things, undermines the consistency of a true system of legal protection of every person," the prelate lamented.

The convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities received its 20th ratification last April, bringing it into force with its optional protocol 30 days later.

### **More than homosexuality**

In regard to the declaration on sexual orientation, gender identity and human rights, Archbishop Migliore noted that it contained 13 paragraphs, three of which ask for the abrogation of every penal law and the cessation of every form of violence perpetrated against persons on account of their sexual orientation or gender.

"Nothing is explicitly said about the decriminalization of 'homosexuality,'" he noted.

Instead, the prelate explained, the categories of sexual orientation and gender identity are used, which "are neither recognized nor univocally defined by international law and, so, are susceptible to being interpreted and defined according to the intentions of those who refer to them."

"If they are accepted in their fluid and imprecise state, as the declaration asks, that would cause a grave uncertainty about rights," he said. "One possible distortion is that, if a country or religious group would refuse to celebrate a marriage for same-sex couples or permit them to adopt children, it might be [seen as] violating these antidiscrimination clauses and be penalized; in extreme cases religious ministers could indeed be ordered to celebrate these kinds of 'marriages.'"

Archbishop Migliore criticized the media for comparing the Church to countries whose laws make homosexuality a crime punishable by death.

The Holy See, in fact, in a decisive way calls on "individuals and countries to put an end to every form of violence and unjust discrimination against homosexual persons," he affirmed.

### **Discernment**

Recalling the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Archbishop Migliore emphasized the Church's contribution to reflection on human rights, which "is never separated from the perspective of faith in God the Creator."

"In dealing with rights that have to do with life and the conduct of persons, communities and peoples," he observed, "discernment foresees that we must ask every time whether demands for the recognition of new rights promote a true good for all and what the relationship is to other rights and with each person's responsibility."

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