



Report by Denis VIENOT **President of Caritas Internationalis**

General Assembly 2007

Members of Caritas Internationalis, Guests of Honour, Members of the Staff of the General Secretariat, International Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have just opened our General Assembly, whose theme “Witnesses of Charity, Builders of Peace” places us at the very heart of our ecclesial mission. Being witnesses of charity means taking a firm stand in social pastoral work; being builders of peace means also turning towards civil society. In all your talks and regional forums you have heard me analyse the role of our Confederation in this link between social pastoral work and civil society.

Since our preceding General Assembly, we met in meditation and prayer following the death of Pope John Paul II and our President Archbishop Youhanna Fouad El-Hage. Many of us were in Tripoli, Lebanon to attend the latter's funeral. When we arrived in this mainly Sunni Muslim town, the extraordinary influence of this man was evident in the streets, where his portrait in the formal dress of a Maronite archbishop was everywhere.

As president since May 2005 (in application of Article 55.C of the Internal Rules, which state that vice-presidents replace presidents according to the order of precedence; I had been elected first vice-president by the General Assembly of 2003), I wish to pay homage to my predecessor.

We had worked together in the framework of Caritas Lebanon, which he hoped to see committed, with its thousands of volunteers, to the promotion and development of all men and women despite the emergency situation caused by the war. He forms part of that courageous line of Churchmen who have built the Caritas Lebanon that has so often been crucified. The president that we elected for the first time in 1999 has bequeathed to us his pastoral wealth at the service of all Caritas organisations. A decisive actor in the strategic planning process of Caritas Internationalis, he always pushed us with wisdom, clear-sightedness and humour towards new commitments in the areas of advocacy, peace-building, and relations with the Holy See. These commitments were rooted in the soil of charity that the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* by Benedict XVI stresses so well. I have pursued these commitments fostered by Archbishop Fouad El-Hage with the firm desire to develop and adapt them to the evolution of the world, with the Bureau and the Executive Committee, Secretary General Duncan MacLaren and his team, and Msgr Nelson Viola, ecclesiastical assistant. The latter gave up his duties in mid-2006; I offer him my heartfelt thanks for his passion for Caritas and also my congratulations to his replacement, Father Hubert Matusiewicz, former vice-director of Caritas Poland.

This report is thus based on the commitments held by my predecessor: advocacy, peace-building, and internal and external relations.

Strictly speaking, advocacy is the defence of the cause that one wishes to promote. As its name indicates, advocacy pleads, or speaks, to defend the cause of the poor and above all to help them to exercise their power. It must be accompanied by a strategy aimed

at influencing decision-makers to adopt actions or initiatives leading to specific changes that benefit the poor. It is a way of thinking before acting that involves constantly asking oneself the question “why?”, until the profound causes of the problem have been determined and one has attempted to resolve the situation on the basis of this information. Advocacy thus involves fostering integral human development.

It is a way of thinking, but also of working, because it consists of reflecting on the organisation of teamwork in order to change structures, policies, procedures and practices. It will often improve the political or economic environment in which people live, and, as a result, projects will be more effective.

Several facts could nourish the work of the Confederation in the field of advocacy: the setback of the United Nations Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their financing, linked to an individualism that threatens multilateralism; the decline of social protection systems, which emerged following the catastrophe in Louisiana in the United States and is spreading throughout Europe; the mechanisms of globalisation that one can see so well in Asia and Latin America, which grossly favour the liberal market; climate change, of which we already see the first dramatic effects hitting Oceania; the role of the State as a guarantor and protector, strongly questioned on all continents and particularly due to the armed conflicts in Africa and the Middle East.

Advocacy is necessary today for the effectiveness of our network, and we must therefore develop it. This is shown by two current examples for our Confederation: the work of Caritas Europa on the defence of the right to asylum and the defence of family reunion for immigrants; and the current campaign with CIDSE, “*Make aid work. The world can’t wait*”, with the aim of funding the Millennium Development Goals, emphasising the fight against corruption. This campaign will be further deepened in June 2007 when the G8 meet in Germany.

Caritas Internationalis does not have 80 people working in advocacy, so our angle must be original and specific: it must further foster our ability to present the human face of poverty whilst consolidating our work on social and economic questions. One of the advantages arising from advocacy is that it facilitates relations and collaborations with organisations such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which allows us—indirectly—to gain access to the Security Council and to improve our work. The commitment of Caritas Uganda to provide humanitarian aid to former rebels in the north of its country during the negotiations being held in Juba, Sudan is an example of this cooperation.

We also collaborate with other humanitarian networks. With regard to Darfur, Christian Aid is acting as a facilitator to allow Caritas and ACT/International to press for the creation of a no-fly zone in the region, among other goals.

For the last four years we have better integrated this advocacy work in our practices. A subject of common interest, hunger, has been identified in all the regions, and we have approached it from the viewpoint of trade. Possible synergies were sought: CIDSE and its working group, in which we are represented by a member of NASSA/Caritas Philippines; the Asian Partnership for Human Development/APHD for agriculture, as well as in Latin America for trade and bilateral and regional trade agreements. In Africa, we have encouraged training in advocacy, which has coincided with the debate on the WTO based on the concerns of the national Caritas organisations, and with work carried out by each Caritas organisation in relation to the Conference of the WTO in Hong Kong in December 2005.

In order to further illustrate this advocacy work, I would like to offer you a report on my work on Palestine, first of all in Jerusalem with the Palestine working group, which benefited from the presence of Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch and president of Caritas: the violations of human rights must lead to a reinforcement of our campaign “*Holy Land. Peace is possible*”. Then, I discussed the problem with several interlocutors on my visit to the UN in December 2006, and in February 2007 with the diocesan directors of CRS in Washington. Finally, I participated in the meeting of the “Co-ordination of Episcopal Conferences in Support of the Church of the Holy Land and the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land” in January 2006. This meeting was attended by eleven representatives from Episcopal Conferences, the United States, Germany, England and Wales, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Canada, Caritas Jerusalem (Claudette Habesch, secretary general of Caritas and president of the MONA region), Pax Christi, the Patriarch Michel Sabbah and the bishops of the Holy Land. At the time of this meeting we visited the parishes of Galilee and were able to grasp the specific difficulties Christians face. The work dealt with the political situation and inter-religious dialogue, which, there as elsewhere, took four specific forms: shared daily life, joint action for development and liberation, theological exchange, and sharing of religious and spiritual experiences.

Then, the very nature of this common good dictates that all citizens are involved in it, in a diversity of ways according to the occupation, merits and condition of each one. This is why the efforts of public

authorities should tend to serve the interests of all without favouritism towards any individuals or social classes. Our predecessor Leo XIII expressed it as follows: "The civil power must not be subservient to the advantage of any one individual, or of some few persons; inasmuch as it was established for the common good of all." (Pacem in Terris, 56)

Peace, one of the topics of our General Assembly, has been reflected with specific words: witnesses and builders are terms of action, not abstract terms.

"Witnesses of Charity, Builders of Peace" intimately binds our local realities with our fundamental concepts: the deepening of our roots in the light of the issues of the world, the 40th anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, the publication of *Deus Caritas Est*, and the drawing up of the new joint strategic directions for 2007-2011.

When he received six new ambassadors in December 2006, Benedict XVI delivered a message to them, from which I extract the following words: *"In fact, it is the duty of social Leaders not to create or allow situations of serious political, economic or social discontent to persist in a country or a region that would make people feel they were social outcasts, barred from the areas of decision making and management, and that they had no right to benefit from the fruits of the gross national product. Such forms of injustice cannot but be a source of unrest and engender a sort of spiral of violence. The search for peace, justice and understanding among all must be priority targets that demand of people in responsible positions attention to practical situations in the country and an effort to eliminate all that opposes equity and solidarity, especially corruption and the lack of sharing of resources."*

Echoing this, when asked about terrorism at the prize-giving ceremony, the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize 2006, Muhammad Yunus, replied: *"Fanaticism is the direct result of extreme poverty: in exchange for three meals a day and a gun, people are ready to fight anyone you wish without asking questions. On the other hand, when the economic situation of peoples improves, it becomes more difficult to convert them to fanaticism. Terrorism has no rationality; It is a completely irrational form of combat. When rational means seem inoperative to them, people fall into this irrationality. That is why terrorism forms an integral part of the system of injustice."*

When it fights poverty, our Confederation participates in peace-building. The specific and organised commitment of Caritas Internationalis in the field of peace and reconciliation dates from 1995, after the events in Rwanda and the Balkans, with two results: the publication of a manual and a training guide and the training of over 4000 people in all the regions of the world. This led us to reposition our approach: to protect populations, to support real and potential victims, to reject preventive war, to respect human rights even in the fight against terrorism—in short, to choose the path of dialogue. This is why we strive in our activities to bring together people and communities.

Peace-building is based on justice and reconciliation. The campaign of Caritas Internationalis on Colombia therefore calls for a fair and negotiated peace. The recognition of the rights of victims is too often forgotten because it is not sufficient to base one's action on truth, justice and forgiveness and to ignore the reparation that victims are entitled to expect—symbolic reparations through penal sentences, for example, and possibly through material reparations.

Our participation in peace-building also aims to transform unfair structures, to promote changes towards greater justice.

This leads to clarifications such as those that we have provided on the engagement of military forces in humanitarian work. This is a new trend, as was shown by NATO's relief operation in Pakistan following the earthquake in 2005. A few legitimate protests from Muslim political parties failed to spoil the climate of goodwill surrounding this new development, which broke the international rules on the engagement of NATO outside its zone. There is a more general confusion between military missions and humanitarian missions in Afghanistan, where foreign forces with different statuses rub shoulders. This is not to say that collaboration should never exist, but that one should avoid dangerous situations when the political and humanitarian spheres are too closely linked. One should also not forget the issues of the security of victims and staff, and the prohibitive financial cost of military intervention.

Some progress is being made. The disappointing session of the General Assembly of the United Nations last September decided, despite everything, to reinforce the peace-keeping capacities and recognised the collective responsibility to protect civil populations threatened by genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, through the Security Council.

Tackling the causes also means realising that there is a great difference between the positions expressed (the visible part of the iceberg) and the political, economic, cultural, religious and social interests

(the submerged part). Our forum on peace, which took place in Colombo, Sri Lanka in 2006 opened paths: peace, “bread”, freedom, justice and fraternity. The merry-go-round of causes and effects rotates, and we are its spectators and actors. The forum helped to find more balance, fraternity, justice, solidarity and charity by giving new and effective tools of action to those who have agreed to become involved in building partnerships on a global scale.

Internal and external relations of Caritas Internationalis

Attached to this report, you will find a chronology of the relations that I have had with different bodies of the Church, civil society and our network as president of the Confederation, apart from those linked to the end of my mandate as president of the Europe region, from May to November 2005. In addition to their quantity and diversity, there are other characteristics of the relations of Caritas Internationalis that I would like to mention.

With regard to the Holy See and the Church, they are first and foremost working relations with the Vatican bodies: the Secretariat of State, the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health Care Workers and the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples. These fruitful relations show that the Holy See appreciates its international network of Caritas organisations. Caritas Internationalis must clarify these relations in the 2007-2011 work plan based on its status as a public entity of the Church, the legal situations of its members, and its action in national and international society. Three examples show how much Caritas Internationalis collaborates with the Holy See and benefits from its support and advice: the development of Caritas work with regard to China, the enormous humanitarian programmes in North Korea, now followed by development programmes, and the promotion of Catholic groups of reflection and action with regard to AIDS.

To these relations one must add the new active participation of Caritas Internationalis on the Committee of the Conference of International Catholic Organisations, in liaison with the Secretariat of State on the future prospects of international work and the movement towards a regular forum of international actors.

We should also note the monitoring of relations with CIDSE: the meeting of its directors in January 2007, at which we insisted on the need for collaboration with regard to the new advocacy policy of Caritas Internationalis. This collaboration takes into account the different natures of the two networks and the dual approach of Caritas Internationalis: thematic (cotton and trade, for example) and geographic (Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Palestine).

One must also mention the relations with the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), whose presence in Geneva is a genuine asset for ecclesial cooperation in advocacy.

Our relations with the UN are also important. My visit to New York in December 2006 shows how much the presence of Caritas working with the United Nations and with other humanitarian organisations is important in fostering the Catholic vision of support to the poorest. These relations also allow us to broaden our horizons. The same can be said of the visits in Geneva to the delegate of Caritas Internationalis, to the special advisor on HIV/AIDS, to the nuncio, to the WHO and UNAIDS, and the speech given at the International Catholic Centre on the identity, network and action of Caritas.

However, we must analyse the evolution of NGOs in the world because the institutions of the United Nations do not give priority to establishing a (conflictive?) partnership with NGOs in order to increase their legitimacy: they prefer to work with profit-making enterprises. The prestige of international NGOs is somewhat on the decline. The trend is towards foundations, which are better funded, such as the Time Warner Foundation or the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Relations with you, the members of the network, are a priority and provide opportunities of proximity that have allowed me to learn and to understand your local situations and difficulties, and also to appreciate our profound originality in combining the fight against poverty and the promotion of justice with social pastoral work.

In two years, I have made 29 visits to members of our Confederation or countries and participated in all the 2006-2007 regional conferences and regional commissions and forums.

Particular attention is given to the following Caritas organisations or countries: Iran, Iraq and China. In Iran (in addition to the courageous work of all our network and particularly of Cordaid and Caritas Switzerland), Caritas Italy made it possible to carry out the work necessary following the earthquake in Bam on 26 December 2003. This is a practical example of the link between emergency work and long-term action: victims who had become paralysed by the disaster initiated a medical and social process whereby over fifty handicap-accessible houses were built and 75 small businesses were set up. Iraq,

a disaster-stricken country that continually calls for help, displays courage that is a light in the darkness for us; support for programmes for pregnant and breastfeeding women and young children continue. As for China, we are busy building a new coordinated project, initially to support Catholic diocesan social organisations in coordination with the Caritas organisations of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan; this work is endorsed and supported by Cardinal Zen Ze-Kim of Hong Kong. Relations between Caritas organisations show first and foremost a fraternal and specific solidarity—the true meaning of the word partnership.

With regard to relations, we must consider our organisation in Rome. Relations with the General Secretariat, the Bureau, the Executive Committee, the statutory commissions and the working groups are regular and frequent; this requires a great deal of availability. Over and above the tasks of organisation and functioning, I would like first to make a comment: the strategic plan has paved the way for a more rigorous organisation of work at international level by diversifying our fields of activity. I would now like to make a suggestion: the increasing complexity of international problems involves a change of mentality and ways of thinking that must influence our forms of action and organisation, as is shown in the preparatory work for our strategic plan for 2007-2011 and our financial plan.

Two official bodies of our Confederation, the Bureau and the Executive Committee, have accomplished their statutory tasks in the last four years: evaluation of the 2003 Assembly; approval of the work plan and monitoring of its implementation, involving the delegation of certain subjects to the regions; approval of the annual accounts and budgets; appointment of the new auditor; monitoring of the two statutory commissions—the Finance Commission and the Legal Affairs Commission—and of the working groups; and supervision of the revision of the translation of the Statutes and Internal Rules into English and Spanish by certified native translators in each language.

I would like to mention in particular the study of the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* and the canonical status of Caritas Internationalis following the chirograph from John Paul II on 16 September 2004. The new Bureau and Executive Committee must place on their agendas the question of the status of the Confederation and also relations with the Holy See, which have shown a positive development in the last few years. In total, there have been five meetings of the Executive Committee (generally lasting three days) and nine meetings of the Bureau (generally lasting two days) on many subjects. One such subject is the work of the Gender Working Group, which allows the Confederation to perceive the specific wealth of the complementary nature of men and women at the level of both the structures of our organisation and the vision.

The Bureau has dealt more specifically with personnel policy, and in particular, the emergency policy with regard to the tsunami. It has studied several local situations: Caritas Iraq, the crisis in Darfur, the evolution of the Asia Partnership for Human Development (APHD), and the reconstruction of Church premises following natural disasters. It has also continued research work on the history of the Confederation.

The Executive Committee has approved the document on relations with the military in cases of emergency and for this purpose benefited from the work of an inter-regional seminar held in Rome in December 2003, at which Archbishop Fouad El-Hage participated. It has also approved the guidelines on human trafficking. It has studied at length the setting up of working mechanisms in emergencies and has worked on inter-religious dialogue. It has had several meetings with the secretaries general of CIDSE and ICMC to evaluate collaboration with these “strategic allies”.

It has stimulated the revision of the functioning of the Confederation (Caritas as a world actor and network) and a reflection on regionalisation, the functioning of the Secretariat, partnership and financing. A study has also been made on the best roles of the Bureau and the Executive Committee, with the strengthening of their work, for which their new members for the period 2007-2011 must prepare. Initial steps have been taken, and must be continued with the work of this General Assembly on the strategic plan and its implementation by the future Executive Committee in the shape of the 2007-2011 work plan, among others.

Below I present an extract from the chirograph of Pope John Paul II:

*Letter of John Paul II
during the last supper
to Caritas Internationalis for the acquisition of a public, juridic and
canonical personality*

*The effective practice of charity, expressed in particular by attention
to the poor and the weak*

*To my Venerable Brother Archbishop Youhanna Fouad El-Hage of Tarabulus for Maronites,
Lebanon, President of Caritas Internationalis*

[...]

In the context of the Holy Year of 1950, my Venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God Pius XII, decided to set up a body in Rome that would operate in the universal Church and gather together the national charitable agencies authorized by the respective Bishops in order to foster reciprocal knowledge, coordination and collaboration in carrying out charitable and social activities in the various parts of the world. Other Predecessors of mine of venerable memory followed the growth of Caritas Internationalis with effective fatherly interest. Thus, the Servant of God Paul VI was able to attest with satisfaction that it "is at work everywhere" (Encyclical Populorum Progressio, n. 46).

2. Born from an impulse of this Apostolic See which then supervised and directed its activity, Caritas Internationalis is made up of a Confederation of charitable agencies, usually the national branches of Caritas. This Confederation, far from limiting the autonomy to which these branches are entitled, fosters their collaboration through its activities of animation, coordination and representation. Caritas Internationalis, therefore, because of its origin and nature, is closely bound to the Pastors of the Church, and in particular to the Successor of Peter, who presides in universal charity (cf. St Ignatius of Antioch, Ep. ad Romanos, inscr.), and draws inspiration for its action from the Gospel and from the Tradition of the Church. Since its foundation, Caritas Internationalis has intervened through its member organizations in a multitude of projects and has also acquired recognition and prestige from civil Authorities.

3. Consequently, in confirmation of the ecclesial role carried out by this praiseworthy Confederation and accepting the request explicitly made in this regard, by virtue of apostolic authority and in accordance with the norms of the Code of Canon Law, I grant to Caritas Internationalis public, juridic and canonical personality (cf. Code of Canon Law, cann. 116-123). I approve its Statutes and Regulations, which must be interpreted in the light of what has been established in this Chirograph. All modifications to them as, likewise, any eventual transfer of its headquarters, which is currently located in the City of Rome, must be approved by me.

[...]

6. While I hope that this act will strengthen the bonds of communion of Caritas Internationalis with the universal Church, I order all the measures in this Document to be faithfully observed. Venerable Brother, as I entrust the commitment and activity of the Confederation to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Visitation and of St Martin de Porres who are the Confederation's heavenly Patrons, I impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you and to all the members.

From Castel Gandolfo, 16 September 2004

A report by the president of Caritas Internationalis, in any year, must always deal with emergencies and their consequences on our internal relations. The long litany of names is also the long agony of millions of victims of human-made and natural disasters. Palestine-Israel, the war in Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Darfur, Uganda, human trafficking, trade and food and HIV-AIDS. However, we must also add the consequences of climate change: a planetary emergency.

Among all these emergencies, in two years, I was present on the ground for the tsunami, and visited four of the Caritas organisations affected: those in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Thailand, and their "facilitating partners" Germany, France and CRS. I was also in New Orleans in the USA; in Pakistan,

where I went in October 2005, following the earthquake, to support the coordination of Caritas organisations initiated by Caritas Germany and continued by CAFOD; in Darfur; in Lebanon; and in Afghanistan, where responsibility of the coordination is shared on a rotating basis by our members on the ground. Globally, our way of working based on the coordination of actions has clearly improved, but we must continue to perfect it. Our General Assembly will be a time to look at this structurally.

Allow me to dwell on two emergency situations. The first situation is that of the tsunami. In Colombo, Sri Lanka, I spoke at length with Father Damian Fernando, Director of Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC, I met the national Caritas organisations, the diocesan directors and the Caritas teams of the “facilitating and sub-facilitating partners” and took part in a meeting to revise the programmes led by Bishop Yvon Ambrose, the former regional coordinator of Caritas Asia. I was able to visit a housing project in the diocese of Colombo and to participate in a meeting of the task force set up by the Episcopal Conference to support and accompany Caritas Sri Lanka-SEDEC. Presided by the president of this organisation, it includes two other bishops and four professionals with responsibilities in the economic and legal areas. This task force has played and will play an important role for strengthening the national structure and its service links with the diocesan Caritas organisations. The meeting with the Apostolic Nuncio allowed us to gain a better understanding of the current tensions with regard to religious freedom that must be integrated in our Caritas perspectives. This is a particularly important subject in view of the worsening situation.

In Chennai, India, I met the president of Caritas India, Bishop Remigius and the then director, Father John Noronha, and evaluated the situation with the emergency officers and the Caritas team that is managing operations there. Thanks to Caritas Germany, I enjoyed the support of Gerhard Meier, former secretary general of Caritas Internationalis, whom I had the pleasure to find still actively involved. The visits to the Caritas organisations of Pondicherry and Chennai showed the strength of the diocesan network. The meetings with the bishops of these two dioceses highlight the good links between them and their diocesan Caritas organisation.

In India and Sri Lanka the question of land—which is equally crucial in Indonesia, where the rebirth of Caritas is a joy—must be integrated in our strategies. In these countries the link between counselling work and the response to the tsunami is clear and essential. In Sri Lanka the continuation of peace and reconciliation programmes is vital.

Of course, the extent of the work, including the building of houses and the enormous budgets—and the constraints of both—have at times threatened the calm of the partnership. Work on emergency mechanisms within the International Cooperation Committee, in liaison with the Secretariat of Caritas Internationalis, leaves room for improvement.

This tsunami has raised enormous sums of private money and has placed the networks in competition, the issue being the communication and image presented by each to the media. According to Jan Egeland, former humanitarian coordinator of the United Nations, whom I met in New York in December 2006, “*ten years ago there were 100 international NGOs, now there are 500; and there will be about 1000 in ten years*”. There is therefore an absolute need for greater coordination between international networks. Caritas Internationalis is already very engaged on a conceptual level in the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR), and on a practical level in Darfur with ACT International, for example.

The second emergency situation on which I invite you to reflect concerns a rich country, the USA, and the effects of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Last February, at a meeting in Washington of the Caritas organisations of North America and Latin America and the Caribbean, I had another opportunity to meet with those in charge of Catholic Charities, whom I had met on the ground in October 2005 when they were receiving methodological support from CRS. More than a year after this disaster, they reported as follows: of the million victims, 200,000 were re-housed in situ, and 800,000 were housed in a new dwelling, with friends, or in centres; but they were dispersed all over the USA. Several tens of thousands are living in trailers. The universities are operating again but the hospitals are not. What must one do in this situation?

All of us who are gathered here know the courage of our workers who—often in a climate of great insecurity—manage to provide hope to the affected populations. My thoughts go out in particular to those who had to pay for this charitable response with their lives. We know, because we have witnessed it, that in addition to the immediate aid, a Caritas that is present on the ground offers protection for displaced people. However, in parallel, our network must be aware that emergencies may make us fall into the temptation of paternalism if they are not accompanied by a true perspective of development and a conscious effort to foster partnership, peace, and social pastoral work.

These emergencies are the absolute priority for all the personnel of the General Secretariat and I

can bear witness to their generous efforts; allow me to thank them in the name of all of us.

To conclude this report, let us summarise the confrontation of two visions of charity presented at the international conference on charity organised by the Pontifical Council Cor Unum— charged by the Holy Father to “follow and accompany” Caritas Internationalis—in January 2006. Quite a few of you were present in this very Synod Room in which we are holding our General Assembly. At this conference James Wolfensohn, former president of the World Bank, insisted on the need for organised frameworks for developing practical collaboration between public and private actors in the widest sense, stressing the contribution made by the Church through its continuing presence and action, as well as its commitment on difficult subjects such as health and education. He also mentioned law, the fight against corruption, governance and water as essential sectors.

Invited to present the "other vision", after developing the subject of Caritas as an instrument of the mystical and institutional charity of the Church, my communication, based on the example of the Democratic Republic of Congo, supported the positive principle of collaboration nurtured by practice and field work in the areas of emergency and humanitarian aid, development, fostering rights (as has been seen in recent years in the programmes carried out), and advocacy towards international financial institutions.

The debate that followed clearly raised the question of cooperation between religions. In his concluding intervention, Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago, characterised charity as the trust between givers and receivers of aid, shaped out of mutual respect and dignity, and community-building.

The day after this conference the encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* was published by Pope Benedict XVI. Inviting us to meditate, it is now one of the paths of the deeper approach that we must follow. The text repeatedly returns specifically to the organisation of charity: the coordinating role of bishops, subsidies from the public authorities, tax deductions, training of agents. *“The Second Vatican Council rightly observed that: “among the signs of our times, one particularly worthy of note is a growing, inescapable sense of solidarity between all peoples”. State bodies and humanitarian associations favour initiatives in order to achieve this goal, through subsidies or tax relief for some, making available considerable resources for others. The solidarity shown by civil society thus significantly surpasses that shown by individuals.”* (30a)

How often is this passage not illustrated by the actions of our Caritas organisations? In February 2005 I met displaced people of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, a mountain range in Colombia rising 5700 metres above the Caribbean Sea, and was able to see how Caritas accompanies and supports traditional leaders facing conflicts with armed groups (paramilitary groups that govern the plains, and guerrilla groups in the mountains), forced displacements, precarious living conditions in the suffocating shanty towns of the large coastal cities, electrification of the villages in their territories, which pushes up housing prices, and the killing of 40 officials, leaders, teachers, doctors and nurses since 1996. Only organised charity can face up to the horror that is experienced by the poorest people.

Our humanitarian, charitable, and social and medical organisations know how important structure is in order to be effective. This report is intended to be a faithful reflection of the wealth of the 162 Caritas organisations.

Denis Viénot, March 2007

**Encounters, meetings and visits of Denis Viénot,
often accompanied by the secretary general, the ecclesiastical assistant
or members of the General Secretariat of Caritas Internationalis**

May 2005

Bureau of Caritas Internationalis (CI)
Regional Conference of Caritas Europa in Brussels, Belgium
Darfur Meeting, Paris
Sudan Group of CI and CIDSE, Paris
COATNET meeting in Brussels

June 2005

Visit to Caritas Serbia-Montenegro, with Father Erny Gillen (Caritas Luxembourg)
Meeting with Caritas Italy
Migration Forum, Caritas Europe, Bad Honeff, Germany

July 2005

Meeting with HE Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
Meeting with Msgr Paul Josef Cordes, president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum, and Msgr Karel Kasteel, Msgr Giovanni Pietro Dal Toso and Father Segundo Tejado Munoz
Meeting with Msgr Pietro Parolin, under-secretary of state
Visit to CAFOD (England & Wales)
Visit to Sri Lanka, Caritas, Nuncio, victims of the tsunami
Visit to India, Caritas, victims of the tsunami
Visit to Togo, Caritas, Justice and Peace, Nuncio

August 2005

Fiftieth anniversary of the Cité Saint-Pierre (Secours Catholique), Lourdes, France

September 2005

Meetings on the tsunami at CI
Meetings on Pakistan and Afghanistan at CI
Visits to Caritas Germany, Switzerland, Cordaid
Legal Affairs Commission at CI

Inter-regional seminar on human trafficking at CI

October 2005

Visit to Pakistan, Caritas, CRS, Nuncio, victims of the earthquake
Caritas Africa Forum in Kampala, Uganda
Meeting on Colombia at the European Parliament, Brussels
Visit to New Orleans / Katrina, USA
Visit to Thailand, Caritas, HE Cardinal Michael Michai Kitbunchu, Nuncio, victims of the tsunami in the diocese of Suratani
Finance Commission at CI
Gender Group at CI
Peace and Reconciliation Group at CI

November 2005

Bureau and Executive Committee of CI
Caritas Africa /Caritas Europa liaison group, Rome
Regional Commission of Caritas MONA, Rome
Assembly of the International Catholic Organisations (ICO), Jerusalem
Meeting with Msgr Michel Sabbah, Patriarch of Jerusalem and Msgr Fouad Twal
Meeting with Msgr Paolino Lukudu, Archbishop of Juba in Sudan
Meeting with the Nuncio to the European Union in Brussels

December 2005

Visit to Indonesia, Caritas, HE Cardinal Julius Riyadi Darmaatmadja, Nuncio, victims of the tsunami in Medan, Nias and Aceh
Press conference, 1st anniversary of the tsunami at CI

January 2006

International Conference on Charity, Pontifical Council Cor Unum
Meeting of the Directors of CIDSE and exchange with H.E Cardinal Oscar Andres Rodriguez Maradiaga, Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Meeting with the International Catholic Migration Commission, ICMC, Johan Ketelers, secretary general, Geneva
General Assembly of Caritas Spain

February 2006

Meeting with HE Cardinal Stephen Hamao, president of the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples
Meeting with Msgr Giovanni Layolo, secretary for relations with states, Secretariat of State, Msgr Pietro Parolin, under-secretary, and the China officer
Meeting with the officer for the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Sudan, Secretariat of State
International Advocacy Committee at CI
Meeting on China at CI
Meetings on the tsunami at CI
Meeting CI, Caritas Europe, CIDSE and CI / CIDSE, presidents and secretaries general

March 2006

Meeting with HE Cardinal Walter Kaspers, president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity
Meeting with HE Msgr Leonardo Sandri, Substitute of the Secretariat of State
Meeting with the officer of the French Section, Secretariat of State
International Cooperation Committee at CI
Meeting on Iraq at CI
Legal Affairs Commission at CI
Meeting with Caritas Sweden at CI
Meeting with the General Secretariat Management Team at CI
Meeting of the ICO Committee in Paris

April 2006

Advocacy Group of CI on Palestine, Jerusalem, His Beatitude Michel Sabbah, Patriarch of Jerusalem
MONA Regional Conference and Forum in Cyprus, Msgr Boutros Gemayel, Maronite archbishop
Meeting of Secours Catholique with Duncan MacLaren, Paris

May 2006

Bureau of CI, Preparatory Committee for the 2007 General Assembly of CI
Dialogue with HE Msgr Paul Josef Cordes, president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum
Visit to Afghanistan, Caritas Germany, Italy, CRS, Trocaire, Cordaid, Chargé d'affaires of the Holy See, social programmes
Visit to Pakistan, Caritas, CRS, Nunciature, victims of the earthquake
Regional Conference of Caritas Europa, Mayence, Germany, and Meeting with HE Cardinal Lehman
Meeting with the Father Louis Samaha, President of Caritas Lebanon, Paris
Visit to the United Nations in Geneva, MOs, UNAIDS, Nuncio, International Catholic Centre

June 2006

Asia Regional Conference and Forum in Manila, Philippines, H.E Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales, Nuncio; 40th anniversary of NASSA
Peace and Reconciliation Forum of CI in Sri Lanka
Seminar on Corruption, Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Rome
Seminar on Partnership, Caritas Europa, Brussels
Meeting of the ICO Committee in Paris
Meeting with the International Catholic Child Bureau at CI

July 2006

Africa Regional Conference in Libreville, Gabon
Oceania Regional Conference and Forum in Wellington, New Zealand, Caritas, Nuncio
Visit to Australia, Caritas, HE Cardinal Pell, archbishop of Sidney, Nuncio, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Catholic social organisations

August 2006

Lebanon and Palestine emergency coordination meetings in Paris

September 2006

Latin America and Caribbean Regional Commission, Acapulco, Mexico
Visit to Lebanon, Caritas, His Beatitude Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir, Nunciature, president of the Republic, Prime Minister, president of the Assembly of Representatives, victims of the South
Haiti Group of CI in Paris
Legal Affairs Commission at CI
Meeting of the ICO Committee in Paris

October 2006

Meeting with HE Cardinal Paul Poupard, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture
Bureau and Executive Committee of CI
Visit to Sudan with Justin Kilcullen (Trocaire, Ireland), Darfur, Sudanaid, Secretary of the Episcopal Conference, Nuncio, CRS
International Advocacy Committee at CI
Meeting with the auditor, the treasurer and the secretary general of CI

November 2006

Meeting with HE Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, secretary of state
Meeting with HE Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
Meeting with HE Cardinal Javier Lozano-Barragan, president of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Health Care Workers
Meeting with His Beatitude Michel Sabbah, Patriarch of Jerusalem, Paris
Meeting with Msgr Dominique Mamberti, secretary for relations with states, Secretariat of State

Meeting with Msgr Pietro Parolin, under-secretary of State, Msgr Gabriele Caccia and Dott. Fermina Alvarez Alonso
Meeting with Ms Claudette Habesch, president of the MONA region, Cologne, Germany
Meeting with the Bureau of CIDSE, Rome
Gender Group at CI

December 2006

Visit to Development and Peace, Canada
Visit to the United Nations, New York, OCHA coordinator, Ambassadors of France, Uganda and Senegal, Nuncio, Conference of Mr Kofi Annan for Human Rights Day, Human Rights Watch
Executive Bureau of Caritas Europe, Brussels

January 2007

Meeting with the General Secretariat Management Team at CI
Meeting of the Directors of CIDSE, Belgium
Coordination of the Episcopal Conferences to support the Church of the Holy Land and the Assembly of Ordinaries of the Holy Land, Nazareth, Israel
Meeting with of the officer of Secadev (Chad) in Paris

February 2007

Meeting with HE Msgr Cordes, president of the Pontifical Council Cor Unum and Msgr Segundo Tejado Munoz, on the premises of CI
North America Regional Conference, Washington, USA
Joint meeting of Caritas North America and Caritas Latin America and the Caribbean, Washington
Visit to Catholic Relief Services, Baltimore, USA
Visit to Catholic Charities, Alexandria, USA
Participation in the “2007 Social Ministry Gathering”, American Episcopal Conference, Washington
Meeting of CI, Caritas Europe, CIDSE and CI / CIDSE, presidents and secretaries general, Brussels
Iran meeting at CI
Strategic task force to prepare the 2007 General Assembly of CI

March 2007

Meeting with HE Cardinal Ignace Moussa Daoud, prefect of the Congregation for Oriental Churches
Meeting with Msgr Vincenzo Di Mauro, delegate to the Amministrazione del Patrimonio della Sede Apostolica (APSA) of the Vatican
Legal Affairs Commission at CI
Gender Working Group at CI
Peace and Reconciliation Working Group at CI
Meeting on China at CI
Meeting on Iraq at CI
Bureau of CI and Preparatory Committee for the 2007 General Assembly of CI
Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Conference, Les Cayes, Haiti
