

## ***Intervention of Monsignor Piero Monni at the World Tourism Organization Assembly in Beijing***

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***Monsignor Piero Monni***

*(Monsignor Piero Monni was the Representative of the Holy See at the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the World Tourism Organization, held in Beijing, October 17-24, 2003. This article is taken from L'Osservatore Romano, October 27-28, 2003.)*

**F**rom the Holy See, I would like to extend greetings to this important Assembly of the World Tourism Organization. This is a fundamental step in the history of the Organization because the World Tourism Organization has proposed to become a Specialized Institution of the United Nations.

The themes chosen for this Assembly generate a thorough reflection on the present state of the world of tourism and of its ethical, social and economic potentiality.

The phenomenon of tourism has always been a vehicle of values, such as respect for personal dignity and fundamental personal rights. It builds a culture of hospitality and of reciprocal understanding. It contributes to the awareness and appreciation of different cultures from around the world.

The Church operates in the world of tourism so that ethical values will always be present in this sector. The Church also reminds us that attention is to be given to the priority of human beings in every social phenomenon, so that even through tourism their cultural and spiritual aspirations can be reached.

Tourism is also an efficient instrument in combating poverty and it represents an important instrument for social and occupational growth. However, it is a sector that is extremely sensitive. It is vulnerable to wars, terrorism, natural disasters and

epidemics. Recent calamities have caused a serious crisis in the international tourism market.

China is just now coming out of the SARS (atypical pneumonia) emergency. The diffusion of this illness marked a moment of crisis even for the ever-growing Chinese tourism market, and for the international tourism industry. On this subject, I would like to mention the Holy See's happiness that the Chinese Government and the Chinese people have overcome the difficult circumstances in which they found themselves.

Nevertheless, the tourist industry is an industry gifted with an enormous capability of comeback. The flow of tourists decreases in some periods of time, but sooner or later the desire to travel again returns. The phenomenon of "tourism" prevails and will always prevail on the attention of governments, institutions and of mass media.

The energy in-born in man's mobility always finds a solution for the limits imposed.

International tourism has seen an authentic boom in the last ten years, especially towards exotic and far away places. Benefiting from this are not only the countries less integrated in the world economy but also the rich ones.

Tourists appreciate cultural and religious values that nowadays can be found together with the search for natural environments and cultures that have not been contaminated. China presents all these elements of attraction and fascination.

In this context, tourism gathers the expectations and the hopes of those who see in it a great source of energy, an energy that is capable of increasing the economic development of various countries.

The Holy See wishes for this Assembly, which has been organized in a country rich in tradition and civilization, to allow periods for positive and peaceful dialogue about the development of the values of truth, liberty and justice.

It is in this atmosphere of loyal and reciprocal understanding that tourists can enjoy excellent and professional quality in the services offered, capable of revealing complete liberty of thought, which is the pride of modern civilization.

Thank you for your attention!