

July 29, 2010 - Belgium – Address of Bishop van Luyn at the European Commission



(ANS – Brussels) – The sixth meeting between the leaders of the Churches and religious communities of Europe and the presidents of the European Commission, European Parliament, and European Council took place in Brussels on July 29. Bishop Adrianus van Luyn, SDB, of Rotterdam, Netherlands, president of the Commission of Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE), spoke at the meeting, inviting religious and lay people to a shared commitment in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, fully convinced that by working together such evils can be defeated.

The meeting was hosted by José Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, Herman Van Rompuy, president of the Council of Europe, and Jerzy Buzek, president of the European Parliament. Taking part in this sixth meeting from the religious world in addition to Bishop van Luyn, representing COMECE, were Cardinal Peter Erdo, archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest and president of the Council of Bishops' Conferences of Europe (CCEE), Dr. Flaminia Giovannelli, undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and various religious leaders (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim as well as from the Sikh and Hindu communities present in the countries of the European Union)

In his address at the European Commission, Bishop van Luyn warned against using technical or administrative measures that convert the poor into "objects of welfare." What he needed, he explained, "is a way of helping poor people that will allow them to be 'players' in the joint struggle with society against poverty and exclusion."

Among the means to reach this objective the Salesian bishop proposed "the fundamental and indispensable principle of solidarity" by which the "otherness of the other" can be accepted without imposing one's own view.

Continuing his address, he considered the economic crisis, and looking at the efforts being made by the EU to come out of it, he said that "we can neither allow the poorest and the weakest in our society to become the victims of this crisis yet again, nor can we burden future generations with the task of cleaning up after our mistakes while failing to do anything ourselves."

In conclusion, the bishop of Rotterdam also spoke about the responsibility of the EU regarding the peoples of the rest of the world and in particular of Africa, asking for a more determined commitment on the part of all the institutions, political, religious, civil and social, for the complete achievement of the Millennium Development Objectives.