

Pope Calls Arms Dealers to Examine Consciences

Appeals to Those in Lucrative Trade to Think of Consequences

VATICAN CITY, JUNE 16, 2008 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI is asking those who deal in the lucrative arms trade to face their consciences and consider the consequences of their business.

The Pope said this today when he addressed Antoine Zanga, the new ambassador of Cameroon to the Holy See.

At the same time, the Holy Father appealed to the international community and governments particularly in Africa, to take the necessary measures to stop the arms trade from spreading death and misery, especially among needy countries.

"I exhort all persons involved in the sale or traffic of arms, with interests that are often extremely lucrative, to ask themselves what are the consequences engendered by their behavior," the Pontiff said. "May the international community commit itself in this field together with the local authorities so that peace in all countries will gain ground every day."

Benedict XVI pointed out that "one of the fundamental duties of political leaders is, without a doubt, to provide harmony for their countrymen and a peaceful social situation, making efforts to put an end to tensions and unrest, which regularly cause conflicts, and to make prevail dialogue and respect for legitimate cultural diversity between social and ethnic groups, in order to build and unify the nation."

Food crisis

Turning his attention to the economic crisis, leaving many families without basic sustenance, the Pope called for micro-projects in developing countries to make individuals responsible for the common good.

"Your country, like many others, particularly on the African continent, suffers because of the present economic situation, which affects numerous families who do not have the minimum to respond to their most fundamental needs," the Holy Father lamented in his French-language address.

He encouraged elements that could alter this tendency, beginning with the responsibility

of every country affected: "Every nation should seek economic and social stability, ceaselessly organizing their own resources, while respecting their own institutions."

In this context, "it is necessary to foster micro-projects which will commit men and women locally, as well as struggle effectively against illicit trade and against the phenomena of corruption," the Pontiff stressed.

The key lies "in having an ever more acute awareness of the common good," he added.

International aid

Moreover, Benedict XVI urged "the international community, through appropriate and well-oriented aid, as well as through a worldwide economic policy," to contribute to break the "vicious circle of underdevelopment and abject poverty."

According to the Bishop of Rome, "It is also necessary to take into account the different phenomena which have a treacherous effect on populations, such as floods, global warming, pandemics, wars and terrorism."

In this context, the Pope encouraged international institutions and local authorities to work to achieve "agreements that have as their objective the relief or canceling of debt and a more just distribution of wealth."

In this way, he affirmed, needy countries will be given "a new economic and social impetus for the good of all the inhabitants" and young people will be given "new hope for a better future."