

“Rebuilding Lives, Rebuilding Communities: Ensuring a Future for Persecuted Christians”

74TH U.N. GENERAL ASSEMBLY, HIGH-LEVEL PANEL DISCUSSION

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H.E Mr. Ernesto Araújo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil (co-host)

TRANSCRIPT – PART ONE

Ernesto Araújo:

Thank you very much, Mr. [UNCLEAR]. Good morning to all. Friends, Peter Szijjarto, who gave me the honor of inviting me to co-host this gathering. His eminence, Cardinal Pietro [UNCLEAR] previously had given me the honor of receiving me in Rome, for which I am greatly thankful. And ministers, participants. For us Christians, in the beginning was the Word, right? [UNCLEAR] logos. And this beginning, when you look at the Greek, archaic, it means more than temporal beginning. It means the principle, the organizing principle of reality and of our faith. So, for us, above all, it's important to speak and this is how it's so important for us to start speaking about the situation of persecuted Christians and to speak about ways of addressing that problem. No more silencing is available to us, like Peter was saying, we need to address this and we need to address, to start by talking and analysing and gathering here is a very important step in that direction. President Jair Bolsonaro, in his speech at the opening of the General Assembly spoke about this issue. He spoke about many issues and he spoke about what presidents think and about what he thinks. It was a speech from the heart. A speech that was criticized because he talked too directly and I think that's exactly what is needed, to talk directly, and to go head-on to the issues. And the issue of persecution of Christians is one of those. Brazil is very much committed to this essential endeavour. We're also part of the launching of the Alliance for Religious Freedom last Monday with the, yeah, with the President – or Tuesday, with the President of, Monday, of President [OVERLAPPING DIALOGUE] yeah, exactly. It's been a busy week. [LAUGHS] With the leadership of President Trump and Secretary Mike Pompeo, another very important initiative. And all that because Brazilians care deeply about this issue. Brazilians are, in the majority, a Christian nation and a religious nation and we care about this issue. And we are trying to bring this new concept of democracy – democracy like doing things that the people care for. This should have been a thing, the original concept of democracy, but it has been too often forgotten. Also, not only for, I say out of a political consideration, but also because of our faith and our faith tells us that the voice of the people is the voice of God. And we are extremely happy to see leaders like President Jair Bolsonaro, like President Orbán, Peter here, speaking about this problem. I was in Hungary recently and I was deeply moved by the way Hungarians take at heart their Christian heritage and their Christian faith. And we are – recommend immensely this effort. So, religions exist and they are a part of mankind. That is too often forgotten nowadays. It looks like religion is something accidental to mankind, but we don't think that's the case. If you read all anthropology texts, you see that no human community, as primitive as it may be, was ever found that doesn't have three elements. Family structure, some sort of family structure, language, and faith in something higher. So, religion, faith, has accompanied mankind since the beginning, just like the family and just like language. And we should not treat this as primitive because otherwise we would also renounce language because language is also what makes us human and since it was, you find language among primitive peoples, it doesn't mean that you should give up language in the same way you should not give up religion just because it comes from the dawn of mankind. The threat that we face is, of course, in a way what we call intolerance and ignorance. Ignorance in our societies. But we have to first, I think, begin by thinking what happens in countries of Christian majority because there is, amazingly and sadly, intolerance against the Christian faith in countries of Christian heritage and Christian majority. In our countries, Christianity is too often ostracized and persecuted, perhaps not by

violence, but by – but by ignorance and by silence. So, we have to begin by understanding ourselves, by looking at the roots of our society and, to the extent that they are rooted in Christian values and in the Christian faith. I believe when you look at the world, we see, for some decades now, but today very intensely, a crisis of spirituality, a crisis of people who no longer are provided with their age-old faith and look at something else. There's this famous saying of Chesterton who said that when you don't believe in God, you believe in anything. So, I believe that, for example, the extreme climate alarmism is part of that phenomenon. You have the concrete issues of climate change that must be addressed, but this – sometimes you have the impression are turning into some sort of substitute religion for some people because of that spiritual void that needs to be filled. So, we – we need to act, we need to act in our societies and we need to act across the world. Christians are persecuted because of age-old hatreds and rivalries of which Christians themselves are not exempt. We are also part of the problem and we have to recognize that. But Christians are also persecuted because of this cultural atmosphere, especially in the West, that doesn't care about Christianity. That sometimes even thinks Christians deserve to suffer and to be persecuted. So, that's the first thing we have to break. We have to change that. Persecuted Christians, in my view, are the beating heart of all the Christian churches. Catholic church, evangelical churches. And this beating heart, it's the center of our faith. We cannot forget that. Us, we that can freely decide about going to church or not going to church, can decide about reading the Bible or not reading the Bible, we should take a lot of attention to people who can't freely decide that. We should not take for granted those freedoms that we enjoy. And this is also a big part of our work. So, just to finish and to come back to the question of the environment that is so present, it has been said that the Amazon, of which Brazil has a huge portion, is the lungs of the world because of the oxygen it produces. Actually, scientifically, it's – it has been challenged, this metaphor, but it stays there. And it's okay. But I think here we should take into account that religion and, for Christians, Christianity, is the lungs of our spiritual world. Thank you very much.

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