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Declaration of the Director of the Holy See Press Room, Dr. Joaquim Navarro-Valls concerning the relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel. 25, JANUARY '91.

" I have been surprised by a certain confusion in the public opinion concerning the question of the relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel.

I.

The first confusion relates to the questions of the "recognition" of a state and the "connection of the diplomatic relations" with that state.

In this respect it would be good to consult a good treatise of international law to understand the difference.

1. The fact that diplomatic relations do not exist between the Holy See and the State of Israel does not imply that the Holy See does not recognize the State of Israel:

A. It is important to clarify that the Holy See does not question the existence of the State of Israel, nor its proclamation of independence:

This was provided by,

- The inclusion of the Israeli delegation among the official delegations sent to the funeral of Pius XII, to the opening and closing of Vatican II Council, the funeral of John XXIII or the official inauguration of the pontificate of His Holiness Pope John Paul II.

- The encounter of Pope Paul VI with the President of the State of Israel in Meghiddo, in Samaria, on the occasion of his trip to the Holy Land (January 1964).

The visits of personalities of the Israeli government to the Vatican:

1969 - Abba Eban, Minister of Foreign Affairs

1973 - Golda Meir, Prime Minister

1975 - Moshe Kol, Minister of Tourism

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1978 - Moshe Dayan, Minister of Foreign Affairs

1982 - I. Shamir, Minister of Foreign Affairs

1985 - S. Peres, Prime Minister

Regular contacts with the Israeli embassy in Italy and the apostolic delegation in Jerusalem with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Concerning this, I can point out that on October 16 Monsignor Andrea Cordero Lanza di Montozemolo, apostolic delegate in Jerusalem at the beginning of his mission, paid a visit to his excellency, Dr. Herzog, President of Israel;

Numerous references of the Holy Father to the State of Israel:

In the majority of the interventions of the Holy Father concerning the problems of the Holy Land and the Middle East, the State of Israel is mentioned and the need for its security is emphasized. As an example it is possible to refer to the following references:

1. \* The Otranto homily of the Holy Father (October 5, 1980):

"The Hebrew people after tragic experiences, after suffering the extermination of so many sons and daughters, willing for security, has given life to the State of Israel..."

\* Apostolic letter "Redemptionis Anno" (April 20, 1984):

"For the Hebrew people, living in the State of Israel and have for that land a precious testimony of faith, we want security and just tranquility, and peace, that are basic for any nation and a condition of life and progress for any society..."

\* Speech to the leaders of the Jewish community in Miami (September 11, 1987):

"...after the tragic extermination of the Shoah, the Hebrew people have started a new period of its history. Like any civil nation, it has a right to a country, in accordance with international law. For the Hebrew people living in the State of Israel..."

\* A speech to the diplomatic corps (January 12, 1991):

"...the aim is to guarantee at this time to the State of Israel the just conditions for its security..."

\* General audience (January 23, 1991):

"...I express in particular my solidarity with everyone in the State of Israel who are suffering for the deprecable bombardments..."

B. One could say that it is an implicit recognition. In international affairs, in the majority of the cases, the recognition of a state is implicit and does not need, according to law, solemn and explicit declarations.

2. The diplomatic relationship is another matter and depends on a series of circumstances and evaluations.

Such relations are voluntary and as international law affirms "no state is obligated to...maintaining diplomatic relations or consular relations with another country." (Balladore Pallieri, International Public Law, Milan 1962, p. 338.)

This is true for all states, how much so for the Holy See, that is not a state, but the central government of the Catholic Church.

The Holy See, not being a state, attends U.N. sessions only as an "observer," though it is free of having or not diplomatic relations with a specific state.

And naturally, the case of Israel, is not the only one with which the Holy See has decided to wait, before agreeing in establishing formal diplomatic relations. One has to remember that in other cases there are no diplomatic relations, but it does not follow that the Holy See does not recognize the state.

- That's the case of South Africa and the Kingdom of Jordania.

- It's the case of Mexico and the Soviet Union with which a process has started towards the establishment of formal diplomatic relations.

- This was, until last year, the case of Poland and other states in central and east Europe.

- In the case of the United States of America there are only recent diplomatic relations. Though, obviously, the Holy See always recognized the United States.

In none of these cases is there any specific motivations. In the case of Israel, the lack of relations is not a matter of theological reasons, only legal matters.

## II.

Another kind of confusion has appeared in the last years in the use of the expressions like Holy See and the State of the Vatican City.

1. The Holy See is a subject of international law. It is the personification of the central government of the church and has been recognized in history like a subject of active and passive legation.

2. Vatican City is a small territorial reality with a function to allow the Pope to exercise freely his ministry of the government of the universal church.

Though the City State of the Vatican didn't exist between 1870-1929, the Holy See had diplomatic relations with many nations.

III.

It is important to point out that there has been until this time legal difficulties of an official linking of the diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel. Those are the difficulties, not clear yet, of the presence of Israel in the occupied territories and the relations with the Palestinians, of the annexation of the Holy City of Jerusalem, as well as the situation of the Church in Israel and the territories under their administration.

IV.

A third source of confusion that appears often is the question of the religious dimensions and political dimensions of the dialogue, and the relations and the attitudes of the Holy See and the Church in regard to Judaism and the relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel.

1. Interreligious relations have developed and have increased:

Last December, the Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism has celebrated the 25th anniversary of the conciliar declaration Nostra Aetate with the participation of representatives of the major Jewish organizations of the world.

In this context one has to point out the importance of the visit of His Holiness to the synagogue in Rome, of his many encounters with Jewish groups during his apostolic trips in many countries of the world, and the pronouncement of the Holy See denouncing anti-Semitism.

2. In regard to the State of Israel, the Holy See has an attitude of deep respect for it, as for other states. In particular, the Holy See considers that the State of Israel must be assured in her existence and security, especially in the search for points of agreement with other nations in the region.

The Holy See knows that for the Jews of all the world, the attachment to the country of their elders, the State of Israel is particularly important, this is understood and respected. The dimension of the religious dialogue and the respect for the Hebrew people and its history has to be put distinctly in the political dimension. This has been clearly expressed in an important 1985 document of the Commission for the Religious Relations with Judaism,

"Christians are invited to understand this religious attachment which finds its roots in Biblical tradition, without making their own particular religious interpretation of this relationship (cf. Declaration of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, November 20, 1975).

"The existence of the State of Israel and its political options should be envisaged not in a perspective which is in itself religious, but in their reference to the common principles of international law."