

Vatican's sight on population conference

NEW YORK (CNS) — Unable to convince the United Nations to change its preparatory document for the International Conference on Population and Development, Pope John Paul II and other Vatican officials turned their sights to the conference itself, set for Sept. 5-13 in Cairo, Egypt.

"No progress was made" in convincing U.N. representatives to change sections of the document on abortion, the family, young people and sex, and the use of artificial contraceptives, according to the head of the Vatican's 10-member delegation to the April 4-22 preparatory session in New York.

Monsignor Diarmuid Martin, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said language on the most controversial matters would be proposed again for consideration in Cairo.

Pope John Paul fought the draft document on several fronts. He convened a meeting of all the diplomats accredited to the Vatican to tell them of his concerns, and sent a letter to world leaders about the document's flaws. He also called President Clinton April 22 to express what U.S. Ambassador to the Vatican Raymond Flynn called the pope's "extreme disappointment" with the document.

Speaking to those gathered in St. Peter's Square April 17 for a noontime prayer, Pope John Paul said the draft document focuses almost exclusively on limiting the number of births in the Third World without paying enough attention to economic development, a better sharing of the world's resources and the need to protect the religious and moral beliefs of families targeted by the population-control policies.

Monsignor Martin, summarizing the preparatory session, said the U.S. delegation had taken a "high-profile" position in trying to get support for abortion inserted throughout the document.

"The present U.S. administration seems to be very clear that it wants access to abortion to be an integral dimension of population policy," he said.

At the last population conference, held in Mexico City in 1984, the Reagan administration successfully worked for a statement opposing abortion as a method of family planning.

Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York also joined in the criticism of the document, saying that U.S. support for it constitutes "ideological imperialism" and a "messianic obsession" with controlling world population.

Those to be controlled, he said, are

"the poor, of course, especially the black poor and the brown poor, the Latino poor, the Asian poor, the African poor, the Middle Eastern poor."

Cardinal O'Connor devoted his weekly columns in the April 7, 14 and 21 issues of the archdiocesan weekly, *Catholic New York*, to an analysis of the planning for the Cairo conference. The paper also carried an editorial in the April 14 issue charging that the proposed Cairo document took "a frightening approach to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment."

The three-week preparatory session was characterized by widespread anti-Vatican and anti-Catholic sentiments.

The *Earth Times*, an unofficial daily paper produced by an independent group but distributed inside the United Nations, made criticism of the Vatican a principal theme in its news and opinion columns and in a daily cartoon strip.

As the final week began, it reported that the challenge facing the committee was to "stave off the potent challenge of the Holy See." On the final day, *The Earth Times* reported that at the top of the list of concerns was "the efforts of the Holy See and a small group of countries to strip the document of any progressive language on abortion."



AP/Wide World Photos
A French U.N. soldier checks his ammunition at Sarajevo airport April 20 while awaiting clearance from Serb authorities to head for Gorazde. Bosnian Serbs blocked a U.N. aid convoy headed for Gorazde April 25 despite pledges to allow free access, but appeared to be moving heavy weapons farther away from the besieged Muslim town.

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