

Arab League Official Visits Pontiff

New Agreement Reached With Holy See

VATICAN CITY, APRIL 24, 2009 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The secretary-general of the League of Arab States visited Benedict XVI today after signing a new agreement with the Holy See.

Amre Moussa signed Thursday a Memorandum of Understanding with the Holy See on behalf of the League.

A Vatican announcement shortly thereafter described the document as further consolidating "the existing ties of collaboration between the Holy See and the League of Arab States, especially at a political and cultural level, in favor of peace, security and stability, both regionally and internationally. Furthermore, it proposes instruments for consultation between the two sides, with particular emphasis on initiatives of interreligious dialogue."

Regarding Moussa's visit today with the Pontiff and with Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, secretary for relations with states, the Vatican reported that the discussions highlighted the "importance of [this] agreement, which seeks to favor an ever greater collaboration between the two parties in favor of peace and justice in the world."

As well, the Vatican confirmed, there was an "interchange of ideas on the international situation, in particular in the Middle East, and on the need to find a just solution to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, and to the other conflicts that grieve the region."

Peace and culture

The apostolic nuncio in Egypt, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, today spoke with Vatican Radio about the memorandum and Moussa's visit with the Holy Father.

He said he considered the document to indicate two areas of cooperation.

First, the archbishop said, it calls for cooperation in "the search for peace; this especially interests the Holy See, and also the Arab League, which did a lot to mediate, particularly during the war in Iraq."

Secondly, he continued, it calls for "cultural cooperation, the dialogue of cultures, the dialogue of civilization and also interreligious dialogue, which can be fulfilled with the Arab League since they have a department for culture."

Now that the memorandum has been signed, the archbishop said, "We have to try to see what we can do and what contribution we can make together."

"I believe that the Arab League very much appreciates the declarations of the Holy Father," Archbishop Fitzgerald added. And, he affirmed, "it also takes into account the situation of Christians in the Arab nations for the furthering of peace and development in the region."

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