



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE ONLINE CONFERENCE
“BUILDING FRATERNITY, DEFENDING JUSTICE.
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INSULAR PEOPLES”**

To Cardinal Peter Turkson

Prefect

Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

On the occasion of the online Conference “*Building Fraternity, Defending Justice. Challenges and Opportunities for Insular Peoples*”, to be held on 21 May 2021, under the auspices of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Anglican Centre of Rome, I would ask you to convey my greetings and prayerful best wishes to the organizers and to all taking part. I offer a particular greeting to His Excellency Wavel Ramkalawan, President of the Republic of Seychelles and to His Grace Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, with appreciation for their participation.

This important ecumenical initiative, involving mutual dialogue born of the wisdom and experience of various Christian traditions, offers an opportunity for believers, government leaders and members of the broader civil society, especially the young, to address the particular challenges faced by insular peoples. Among these, I would mention violence, terrorism, poverty, hunger and the many forms of social and economic injustice and inequality that nowadays bring harm to all, but in particular to women and children. Of concern too is the fact that many island peoples are exposed to extreme environmental and climate changes, some of which result from an unbridled exploitation of natural and human resources. As a result, they are experiencing not only environmental deterioration but also a human and social deterioration that increasingly puts at risk the lives of the inhabitants of these island and sea territories. It is my hope that the Conference will contribute to the development of practical international and regional policies aimed at meeting such challenges more effectively and strengthening the awareness of everyone’s responsibility to care for our common home.

In these months of pandemic, we have become ever more conscious of our fragility and consequently of the need for an integral ecology that can sustain not only physical ecosystems but human ones as well. Since “everything is interconnected... genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others” (*Laudato Si'*, 70). For this reason, an attitude of solidarity and respect for each person, created in God’s image and likeness (cf. *Gen* 1:26-27), is all the more necessary in uniting sincere love for our brothers and sisters with an unwavering commitment to resolve the environmental and social problems affecting those living in island and maritime areas. I am grateful for the ongoing efforts being made to build fraternity and defend justice in the societies of these regions (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 271) and I trust that the work accomplished during this meeting will be a sign of the important role that island peoples can play in furthering the growth of a more human and inclusive world.

With these sentiments I cordially invoke upon the participants in the Conference God’s blessings of wisdom, strength and peace.

Rome, from Saint John Lateran, 21 May 2021

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