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Funds raised by Holy See at Expo 2015 to create jobs for displaced Iraqis in Jordan

Vatican City, 10 May 2016 – The funds raised in the Holy See pavilion during Expo Milan 2015 will be used, as requested by Pope Francis, for the project "Promoting job opportunities for displaced Iraqis in Jordania", to be carried out by Caritas Jordan in the Our Lady of Peace Centre in Amman. A sum of 150,000 dollars was raised through donations from the Holy See pavilion's many visitors during the exposition in Milan.

The project, presented at the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", which evaluated it in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Culture, is intended to fulfil Pope Francis' wish to use the money raised in the pavilion for the most vulnerable groups who are suffering as a result of the hostilities in Syria and Iraq: refugees, their families and their children, many of whom are now in Jordan.

Jordan is in fact one of the main countries receiving refugees: there are currently 130,000 Iraqis (around 1.3 per cent of the population) and more than 1,300,000 Syrians. The figures is greater when taking into consideration those who are not yet recorded via the United Nations. The director of Caritas Jordan, Wael Suleiman, has affirmed that despite the efforts of the local Church and governmental authorities, it continues to be extremely difficult for refugees to find employment. "Many of them seek to live in a more dignified way, often without contracts. But the market does not offer many opportunities."

In this sense, the project will provide regularly paid work for fifteen Iraqi refugees, who will work in the production of preserves and in the cultivation and sale of oil and vegetables. Aside from the fifteen workers, their families will also benefit, as they will become self-sufficient. The project will also provide professional training in carpentry, agriculture and the food industry for around two hundred Iraqis, and as a result of occasional work, help will be given to around five hundred Iraqis per year. The sum provided will cover expenses for the first six months, and the phase of self-sufficiency should begin straight after via the proceeds from the sale of products.

The project will be inaugurated on 12 May in the presence of the under-secretary of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", Msgr. Segundo Tejado Muñoz, who will also visit Amman from the 11 to the 13 of the same month.