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"Tourism for all: promoting universal accessibility", theme of World Tourism Day 2016

Vatican City, 24 June 2016 – The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant Peoples today published a message for the World Tourism Day 2016, to be held on 27 September. The document is signed by Cardinal Antonio Maria Vegliò and by Bishop Joseph Kalathiparambil, respectively president and secretary of the dicastery, and focuses on the promotion of

The following is the full text of the message:

"Tourism for all – promoting universal accessibility" is the theme chosen by the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) for World Tourism Day 2016, which will take place, as is custom, on 27 September. The Holy See has adhered to this initiative ever since its inception, being well aware of the great importance that this tourism has, as well as the challenges this phenomenon poses and the opportunities it creates for evangelisation.

In recent decades, the number of persons that have the opportunity of enjoying vacation time has greatly increased. According to the recent statistics from 2015 of the World Tourism Organisation, there were 1,184 billion arrivals of international tourists in the world: a number, which – according to predictions – will reach 2 billion in 2030. To this number, one must add the number of tourists arriving at a local level.

Along with this numeric increase, there has also been a growing awareness of the positive influence that tourism can have on different aspects of life, with its numerous virtues and great potential. Without ignoring the negative or ambiguous aspects, we are convinced that tourism humanises, because it is – to name just a few positive characteristics – a chance for recreation, an opportunity for mutual understanding between peoples and cultures, an instrument for economic development, a promoter of peace and dialogue, a possibility for education and for personal growth, a moment of encounter with nature, and an environment for spiritual growth.

On the basis of this positive evaluation, being well-aware that tourism (in particular) and free time (in general) are "a need present in human nature that manifests an indispensable value in itself", we must surmise (in accordance with the Magisterium of the Church) that tourism is not only an opportunity, but is a right of every person and cannot be limited to certain social classes or to certain specific geographical areas. The World Tourism Organisation itself affirms that tourism "constitutes a right equally open to all the world's inhabitants [...],

and obstacles should not be placed in its way".

Therefore, it is possible to speak of a "right to tourism", which is most definitely a concrete expression of the right "to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay", recognised by Article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948.

However, reality demonstrates that it is currently not available to all, and that there are many people that continue to be excluded from executing this right. First of all, in many developing countries, where basic needs have not yet been guaranteed, the right to tourism appears to be something very distant. To speak of the subject may even seem frivolous, even though tourism can be a resource in the battle against poverty. Yet, even in well-developed nations, we discover that there are significant portions of society that do not have easy access to tourism.

For this reason, a so-called "tourism for all" that can be made use of by anyone is being promoted at an international level. It is a concept which integrates the ideas of "accessible tourism", "sustainable tourism" and "social tourism".

By the term "accessible tourism", one intends the effort made to guarantee that tourist destinations and services are accessible to all, regardless of a person's cultural profile, their permanent or temporary limitations (physical, mental or sensory), or the special needs required by them (e.g.: the needs of children or the elderly).

The concept "sustainable tourism" includes the commitment to obtaining a quality of tourism that is respectful of the cultural and environmental diversity of the place that welcomes, taking into consideration both present and future repercussions. The encyclical letter of Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, can be of great assistance in the good management of Creation, which has been entrusted to all of humanity .

The term "social tourism", on its part, demands that no one be excluded on the basis of a different culture, on a lack of resources, or because they live in less-developed regions. Among the target groups of the interventions in this sector are young persons, families with many children, special needs persons and the elderly, as is stated in the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism.

Therefore, it is necessary to promote a "tourism for all" that is ethical and sustainable; physically, economically and socially accessible; and one that avoids all forms of discrimination. To attain such a goal is only possible through the collaboration of all: politicians, entrepreneurs, consumers, as well as associations involved in this field.

The Church positively evaluates the efforts already made in favour of a "tourism for all" – initiatives "that really put tourism at the service of personal realization and social development". The Church has and continues to offer her contribution both through theoretical reflection and through concrete initiatives (many of which are innovative), accomplished despite limited economic resources, with much dedication, and having attained good results.

May ecclesiastical commitment in favour of a "tourism for all" be both experienced and understood as a "witness to God's particular predilection for the humble".
