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Address of the Holy Father Francis to the United Nations Security Council

The following is the text of the Holy Father's address to the United Nations Security Council, which was read aloud today by His Excellency Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations:

Address of the Holy Father

Mr President of the Security Council,

Mr Secretary General,

Dear Brother, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for this kind invitation to address you, which I willingly accepted because we are living at a crucial moment for humanity, in which peace seems to give way to war. Conflicts are growing, and stability is increasingly put at risk. We are experiencing a third world war fought piecemeal, which, as time passes, seems to become ever more widespread. This Council, whose mandate is to safeguard the world's security and peace, at times seems in people's eyes to be powerless and paralyzed. Yet your work, much appreciated by the Holy See, is essential in order to promote peace. Precisely for this reason, I want to offer you a heartfelt invitation to face our common problems, setting aside ideologies and narrow visions, partisan ideas and interests, and to cultivate a single purpose: to work for the good of all humanity. Indeed, this Council is expected to respect and apply "the Charter of the United Nations with transparency and sincerity, and without ulterior motives, as an obligatory reference point of justice and not as a means of masking spurious intentions".[1]

Today's globalized world has brought all of us closer together, yet it has not made us any more fraternal. Indeed,

we are suffering from a *famine of fraternity*, which arises from the many situations of injustice, poverty and inequality and also from the lack of a culture of solidarity. "New ideologies, characterized by widespread individualism, egocentrism and materialistic consumerism, weaken social bonds, fueling that 'throwaway' mentality, which leads to contempt for and abandonment of, the weakest and those considered 'useless'. In this way human coexistence increasingly tends to resemble a mere *do ut des* which is both pragmatic and selfish".[2] Yet the worst effect of this famine of fraternity is armed conflict and war, that makes enemies of not only individuals but entire peoples, and whose negative consequences reverberate for generations. With the founding of the United Nations, it seemed that the world had learned, after two terrible world wars, to move towards a more stable peace, to become, at last, a family of nations. It seems, though, that we are going backwards in history, with the rise of myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive nationalisms that have kindled conflicts which are not only anachronistic and outdated, but even more violent.[3]

As a man of faith, I believe that peace is God's dream for humanity. Yet sadly I note that because of war, this wonderful dream is becoming changed into a nightmare. To be sure, from the economic point of view, war is often more enticing than peace, inasmuch as it promotes profit, but always for a few and at the expense of the wellbeing of entire populations. The money earned from arms sales is thus money soiled with innocent blood. It takes more courage to renounce easy profits for the sake of keeping peace than to sell ever more sophisticated and powerful weapons. It takes more courage to seek peace than to wage war. It takes more courage to promote encounter than confrontation, to sit at the negotiating table than to continue hostilities.

In order to make peace a reality, we must move away from the logic of the legitimacy of war: if this were valid in earlier times, when wars were more limited in scope, in our own day, with nuclear weapons and those of mass destruction, the battlefield has become practically unlimited, and the effects potentially catastrophic. The time has come to say an emphatic "no" to war, to state that wars are not just, but only peace is just: a stable and lasting peace, built not on the precarious balance of deterrence, but on the fraternity that unites us. Indeed, we are all brothers and sisters, journeying on the same earth, dwelling in a single common home, and we cannot darken the heaven under which we live with the clouds of nationalisms. Where will we end up if everyone thinks only of themselves? So those who strive to build peace must promote fraternity. Building peace is a craft that requires passion and patience, experience and farsightedness, tenacity and dedication, dialogue and diplomacy. And listening as well: listening to the cries of those who are suffering because of wars, especially children. Their tear-stained eyes judge us: the future we prepare for them will be the court of our present choices.

Peace is possible if it is truly desired! Peace should find in this Security Council "its fundamental characteristics, which a wrong idea of peace easily makes one forget. Peace must be based on reason, not passion; magnanimous, not selfish. Peace must be not inert and passive, but dynamic, active and progressive according as the just demands of the declared and equitable rights of man require new and better expressions of peace. Peace must not be weak, inefficient and servile, but strong in the moral reasons that justify it and in the solid support of the nations that must uphold it".[4]

There is still time to write a new chapter of peace in history: we can do so in such a way that war would belong to the past, not to the future. The discussions in this Security Council are aimed at and serve this end. I want to emphasize again a word that I like to repeat, for I consider it decisive: fraternity. Fraternity cannot remain an abstract idea, but must become a real point of departure: indeed, it is "an essential dimension of man, who is a relational being. A lively awareness of this relationality leads us to see and treat each person as a true sister and brother; without it, it becomes impossible to build a just society, a solid and lasting peace".[5]

I assure you of my support, my prayers and the prayers of all the faithful of the Catholic Church on behalf of peace and of every peace process and initiative. I wholeheartedly wish that not only this Security Council but the entire United Nations Organization, its Member States and each of its officials, may always render an effective service to humanity, taking responsibility to preserve not only their own future but that of all, with the boldness to increase now, without fear, what is needed to promote fraternity and peace for the entire planet. "Blessed are the peacemakers" (*Mt 5:9*).

[1] Francis, *Address to the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization*, 25 September 2015.

[2] Francis, *Message for the XLVII World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2014.

[3] Cf. Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, 11.

[4] Paul VI, *Message for the VI World Day of Peace*, 1 January 1973.

[5] Francis, *Message for the XLVII World Day of Peace*, 1 January 2014.
