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HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 240926c

Thursday 26.09.2024

**Apostolic Journey of His Holiness Francis in Luxembourg and Belgium (26 to 29 September 2024)
– Welcome Ceremony, Courtesy Visit to the Grand Duke of Luxembourg in the Grand Ducal Palace, Meeting with the Prime Minister and Meeting with the Authorities, Civil Society and the Diplomatic Corps at the Cercle Cité**

Welcome Ceremony, Courtesy Visit to the Grand Duke of Luxembourg in the Grand Ducal Palace, Meeting with the Prime Minister

Upon arrival at Luxembourg-Findel International Airport, the Holy Father Francis was received by the Grand Duke, His Royal Highness Henri of Luxembourg, the Grand Duchess Maria Teresa of Luxembourg, the Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Luc Frieden, and two young people who offered him flowers.

After the Guard of Honour, the anthems, the Honour of the Flags and the presentation of the respective delegations, the Pope transferred by car to the Grand Ducal Palace of Luxembourg for the courtesy visit to the Grand Duke of Luxembourg.

Upon arriving at the Palace, the Holy Father was received at the main entrance by the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Luxembourg. Together they proceeded to the first floor, where the presentation of the Grand Ducal family took place. They then continued to the ballroom for the signing of the Book of Honour and the official photographs with the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess, the hereditary Grand Dukes and the Grand Ducal family. Pope Francis, the Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess then met privately in the *Salon des Rois*, after the official photograph and the exchange of gifts.

At the same time, in the *Bureau des Ministres*, a brief meeting was held between the Prime Minister, with his delegation, and the Substitute, the Secretary for Relations with States and International Organizations, the Apostolic Nuncio and the Nunciature Secretary.

After the meeting with the Vatican delegation, the Prime Minister joined the Pope in the *Salon des Rois* for a brief discussion. At the end, the Pope transferred by car to the *Cercle Cité* for the meeting with the authorities, civil society and the diplomatic corps.

Meeting with the Authorities, Civil Society and the Diplomatic Corps at the Cercle Cité of Luxembourg

At 11.50, in the *Cercle Cité*, the meeting with the authorities, civil society and the diplomatic corps took place.

Upon arrival, the Holy Father was received outside the *Cercle Cité* by the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, His Excellency Mr. Luc Frieden, and the mayor of the city, Ms. Lydie Polfer. The Grand Duke and the Grand Duchess instead awaited him at the main entrance to the Palace. Pope Francis entered the *Grande Salle*, on the first floor, where he was awaited by political and religious authorities, members of the diplomatic corps, businesspeople and representatives of civil society and culture.

After the introductory speech from the Prime Minister, the Pope delivered his address.

At the end, before leaving the *Grande Salle*, the Holy Father greeted some of the leaders and paused immediately afterwards outside the *Salle Flamande* for the signing of the Book of Honour. He then took leave of the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Luxembourg and the Prime Minister, and transferred to the archepiscopal residence by popemobile. Upon arrival, after receiving a floral tribute from a girl, the Pope greeted the children and young people who were waiting for him outside, and was then received by the staff of the residence.

The following is the address delivered by Pope Francis to those present during the audience with the authorities, the diplomatic corps and civil society:

Address of the Holy Father

*Your Royal Highnesses,
Mr Prime Minister,
Distinguished Representatives of Civil Society,
Esteemed Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your Eminences!*

I am pleased to make this visit to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and I thank Your Royal Highness and the Prime Minister most sincerely for the cordial expressions of welcome you have extended to me. I am likewise grateful for the welcome given by the members of the Grand Duke's family.

Because of its particular geographical location on the border of different linguistic and cultural areas, Luxembourg has frequently found itself at the crossroads of Europe's most significant historical events. Twice, in the first half of the last century, it had to endure invasion and the deprivation of its freedom and independence.

Since the end of the Second World War, your country has drawn upon its history – for history is a teacher of life – and distinguished itself in its commitment to building a united and fraternal Europe in which each country, be it large or small, might have its own role, and where the divisions, quarrels and wars that have been caused by exaggerated forms of nationalism and pernicious ideologies may finally be left behind. Indeed, ideologies are always the enemy of democracy.

It must also be acknowledged that when the logic of confrontation and violent opposition prevails, the areas on the border between conflicting powers end up being heavily involved against their will. Yet when they finally rediscover the ways of wisdom, and opposition is replaced by cooperation, then those same areas on the border

become best placed – and not merely symbolically – for identifying the needs of a new era of peace and the paths to follow.

Indeed, Luxembourg is no exception to this principle, for it was a founding member of the European Union and its predecessor Communities. It is likewise home to numerous European institutions, including the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Court of Auditors and the European Investment Bank. We can do these things when there is peace. Let us not forget that war is always a defeat. Peace is essential, and Luxembourg has a history of being a builder of peace. How sad that today there is a European country where those investments that give the highest return come from the production of weapons. This is very sad.

Moreover, the solid democratic structure of your country, which cherishes the dignity of the human person and the defence of fundamental freedoms, has been essential in allowing Luxembourg to play such a significant role in the continental context. Indeed, it is not the size of the territory nor the number of inhabitants that serve as indispensable conditions for a State to play an important part on the international stage, or for it to become an economic and financial nerve centre. Instead, it is the patient creation of wise institutions and laws, which, by regulating the lives of citizens according to the criteria of fairness and respect for the rule of law, place the person and the common good at the centre, preventing and counteracting the dangers of discrimination and exclusion. Luxembourg is a country with open doors, a beautiful testimony of non-discrimination and non-exclusion.

In this regard, the words spoken by Saint John Paul II on his Visit to Luxembourg in 1985 are still relevant: “Your country, at this important crossroads of cultures, remains faithful to its vocation to be a place of intense exchanges and cooperation between an ever increasing number of countries. I fervently hope that this desire for solidarity will increasingly unite national communities and extend to all the nations of the world, especially the poorest” (*Address at the Welcome Ceremony*, 15 May 1985). In making these affirmations my own, I especially renew my call for the establishment of fraternal relations between peoples, so that all may become participants and protagonists in an organized process of integral development.

The Church’s social doctrine highlights the characteristics of such progress and the ways for achieving it. For my part, I have been following the path of this teaching by expanding upon two major themes: care for creation and fraternity. Indeed, for development to be authentic and integral, we must not plunder or degrade our common home. Likewise, we must not abandon peoples or social groups on the margins, for we are all brothers and sisters. Let us not forget that having wealth includes responsibility. Thus, I ask for constant vigilance so that the most disadvantaged nations will not be neglected, and that they be helped to rise from their impoverished conditions. This is one way to ensure a decrease in the number of those forced to emigrate, often in inhumane and dangerous conditions. With its particular history, and its equally particular geographical location, with just under half of its inhabitants coming from other parts of Europe and the wider world, may Luxembourg be a help and an example in pointing the way forward in welcoming and integrating migrants and refugees. You are indeed a model of this.

Unfortunately, we are seeing the re-emergence, even on the European continent, of rifts and enmities that, instead of being resolved on the basis of mutual goodwill, negotiation and diplomatic efforts, are resulting in open hostilities, leading to destruction and death. It seems that the human heart does not always remember the past and periodically goes astray and returns to the tragic path of war. How forgetful we are of this. To heal this dangerous syndrome, which causes nations to become seriously ill, increases conflicts and risks throwing them into exploits that bring with them immense human costs and further useless massacres, we need to raise our gaze upwards. We also need the daily lives of peoples and their leaders to be motivated by noble and profound spiritual values. It is these values that will prevent reason from succumbing to foolishness and our lapsing into making the same mistakes of the past, mistakes made even worse by the greater technological power that human beings now possess. Luxembourg has a particular capacity for promoting friendship and avoiding these errors. I would even say that it is one of your vocations.

As the Successor of the Apostle Peter, and on behalf of the Church, which – as Saint Paul VI said – is an expert in humanity, I am here to testify that the Gospel is the life source and the ever fresh force of personal and social

renewal. It brings about harmony among all nations, among all peoples; harmony, and the ability to experience and suffer together. It is the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone that is capable of profoundly transforming the human soul, making it capable of doing good even in the most difficult situations, of extinguishing hatred and reconciling parties engaged in conflict. May everyone, every man and woman, in full freedom, know the Gospel of Jesus, who has reconciled God and humanity in his Person, and who, knowing what is in the human heart, can heal its wounds. The Gospel is always positive.

Your Royal Highness, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Luxembourg can show everyone the advantages of peace as opposed to the horrors of war, of the integration and promotion of migrants as opposed to their segregation. In this regard, I extend my deep gratitude, for your enriching attitude of welcoming migrants, and for giving them a place in your society. You likewise show the benefits of cooperation between nations as opposed to the harmful consequences of hardening positions and the selfish and short-sighted or even violent pursuit of one's own interests. Allow me to add one further point: I have seen the birth rate here. Please, have more children, more children! They are the future. I will not say more children and fewer puppies – I say that in Italy – but more children!

Indeed, there is an urgent need for those in authority to engage resolutely and patiently in honest negotiations in order to resolve differences, together with a willingness to find honourable compromises, which undermine nothing and can instead build security and peace for all.

"Pour server", *"To serve"*: this is the motto of my visit here and it refers directly to the mission of the Church, which Christ, the Lord who became a servant, sent into the world as the Father had sent him. Please also remember that for all of us this call *"to serve"* is the highest title of nobility. Service is also your principal task, the way of life to be followed each day. May God enable you always to serve with a joyful and generous heart. And may those who have no faith work for their brothers and sisters, for their country and for society. This is a path we should all follow, always for the common good.

May *Mary Mutter Jesu, Consolatrix Afflictorum, Patrona Civitatis et Patriae Luxemburgensis* watch over Luxembourg and the world and obtain from Jesus her Son peace and every good.

May God bless Luxembourg! Thank you.
