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Message of the Holy Father delivered by the Cardinal Secretary of State at the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) in Baku

The following is the Message of the Holy Father Francis, delivered at the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29), taking place in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 11 to 22 November 2024:

Message

XXIX Session of the Conference of the Parties

to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Baku, 11-22 November 2024

Mr. President,

Distinguished Heads of State and Government, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Pope Francis, I extend cordial greetings to all of you and wish to assure you of His closeness, support and encouragement so that COP29 may succeed in demonstrating that there is an international community ready to look beyond particularisms and to place at the center the good of humanity and our common home, which God has entrusted to our care and responsibility.

The scientific data available to us do not allow any further delay and make it clear that the preservation of creation is one of the most urgent issues of our time. We have also to recognize that it is closely interrelated with the preservation of peace.

COP29 takes in a context conditioned by growing disillusionment with multilateral institutions and dangerous tendencies to build walls. Selfishness – individual, national and of power groups – feeds a climate of mistrust and division that does not respond to the needs of an interdependent world in which we should act and live as members of one family inhabiting the same interconnected global village¹.

«As society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers»². Economic development has not reduced inequality. On the contrary, it has favored the prioritization of profit and special interests at the expense of the protection of the weakest, and has contributed to the progressive worsening of environmental problems.

In order to reverse the trend and create a culture of respect for life and of the dignity of human person it is necessary to understand that the harmful consequences of lifestyles affect everyone and to shape the future together, «to ensure that solutions are proposed from a global perspective, and not simply to defend the interests of a few countries»³.

May the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities”⁴ guide and inspire the work of these weeks. Let historical and present responsibilities become concrete and forward-looking commitments for the future, so that a *New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance*, among the most urgent of this Conference, can emerge from these weeks of work.

Efforts should be made to find solutions that do not further undermine the development and adaptive capacity of many countries that are already burdened with crippling economic debt. When discussing climate finance, it is important to remember that ecological debt and foreign debt are two sides of the same coin, mortgaging the future.

In this perspective, I would like to reiterate an Appeal that Pope Francis made in view of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025, asking the more affluent nations «that they acknowledge the gravity of so many of their past decisions and determine to *forgive the debts* of countries that will never be able to repay them. More than a question of generosity, this is a matter of justice. It is made all the more serious today by a new form of injustice which we increasingly recognize, namely, that “a true ‘ecological debt’ exists, particularly between the global North and South, connected to commercial imbalances with effects on the environment and the disproportionate use of natural resources by certain countries over long periods of time”»⁵.

Indeed, it is essential to seek a new international financial architecture that is human- centered⁶, bold, creative and based on the principles of equity, justice and solidarity. A new international financial architecture that can truly ensure for all countries, especially the poorest and those most vulnerable to climate disasters, both low-carbon and high-sharing development pathways that enable everyone to reach their full potential and see their dignity respected. We have the human and technological resources to reverse course and pursue the virtuous circle of an integral development that is truly humane and inclusive⁷. Let us work together to ensure that COP29 also strengthens the political will to direct these resources towards this noble goal for the common good of humanity today and tomorrow. We have to regain our hope in the ability of humankind that «there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems»⁸. Our «hope [is] that humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities»⁹.

I reiterate the dedication and support of the Holy See in this endeavor, especially in the field of integral ecology education and in raising awareness of the environmental as «a human and social problem on any number of levels»¹⁰ which requires above all a clear commitment, in which the responsibility, the acquisition of knowledge and the participation of each person are fundamental.

We cannot “pass by and look the other way”¹¹. Indifference is an accomplice to injustice.

I appeal, therefore, that, with the common good in mind, we can unmask the mechanisms of self-justification that so often paralyze us: what can I do? How can I contribute?

There is no time for indifference today. We cannot wash our hands of it, with distance, with carelessness, with disinterest. This is the real challenge of our century.

For an ambitious agreement, for every initiative and process aimed at truly inclusive development, I assure you of my support and that of the Holy Father in order to render an effective service to humanity, so that we can all take responsibility for safeguarding not only our own future, but that of all.

Thank you.

1 Cf. Pope Francis, *General Audience*, 2 September 2020.

2 Benedict XVI, *Encyclical Letter Caritas in veritate*, 29 June 2019, n. 19.

3 Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si'*, 24 May 2015, n. 164.

4 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Art. 3.1 and Art. 4.1; Paris Agreement, Art. 2.2.

5 Pope Francis, *Spes non confundit*, 9 May 2024, n. 16, quoting *Encyclical Letter Laudato si'*, 24 May 2015, n. 51.

6 Cf. Saint Paul VI, *Encyclical Letter Populorum progressio*, 26 March 1967, n. 14.

7 Cf. *Ibidem*.

8 Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Laudato si'*, 24 May 2015, n. 61.

9 *Ibidem*, n. 165.

10 Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Laudate Deum*, 4 October 2023, n. 58.

11 Cf. Pope Francis, *Encyclical Letter Fratelli tutti*, 3 October 2020, n. 75.
