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The Pope to new ambassadors: diplomacy is a privileged way of giving a voice to those who suffer violence and persecution

Vatican City, 19 May 2016 – The new ambassadors to the Holy See from Estonia (Väino Reinart), Malawi (Michael Barth Kamphambe Nkhoma), Namibia (Andreas B.D. Guibeb), the Seychelles (Thomas Selby Pillay), Thailand (Nopadol Gunavibool) and Zambia (Muyeba Shichapwa Chikonde) presented their letters of credence to Pope Francis in the Clementine Hall this morning. In his brief address to them, the Holy Father spoke about the need to confront the phenomenon of migration with wisdom, compassion and solidarity, and described diplomacy as privileged way of amplifying and transmitting the cry of those afflicted by the tragedy of violence and persecution.

"Your presence here today is a powerful reminder that, though our nationalities, cultures and religions may be different, we are united by our common humanity and by the shared mission to care for society and creation. This task has become especially urgent given that in the world there are many people who suffer as a result of conflicts and wars, migration, forced displacement and uncertainties caused by economic difficulties. These problems not only require us to reflect and discuss, but also to express concrete signs of solidarity with our brothers and sisters in great need".

However, for this service of solidarity to be effective, "our efforts must be guided towards the pursuit of peace, in which every natural individual right and every form of integral human development may be exercised and guaranteed", he continued. This necessitates efficient and coordinated collaboration, "encouraging the members of our communities to become artisans of peace, promoters of social justice and defenders of the truth with regard to our common home". The Pope remarked that this task is becoming increasingly difficult in a world that appears to be ever more fragmented and polarised. "Many people tend to isolate themselves when faced with the harshness of reality. They fear terrorism and the risk that the growing flow of migrants may radically undermine their culture, their economic stability and their lifestyle. These are fears that we understand and that cannot be dismissed lightly, but should instead be faced with wisdom and compassion, so that the rights and needs of all are respected and supported."

Francis emphasised that it was necessary to be steadfast in our resolution to make their critical condition known to the world, so that "their voice, too weak and unable to make itself heard, can instead be p through ours. The way of diplomacy helps us to amplify and transmit this cry through the search of solutions to the many causes at

the root of current conflicts." This is of special importance in the efforts to "disarm those who use violence, as well as to put an end to the scourge of human trafficking and the trade in drugs that often accompanies this evil".

"While our initiatives in favour of peace should help populations to stay in their homelands, the present moment requires us to help migrants and those who take care of them. We must not allow fears and misunderstandings to weaken our resolve. Rather, we are called to build a culture of dialogue 'that enables us to view others as valid dialogue partners, to respect the foreigner, the immigrant and people from different cultures as worthy of being listened to'. In this way we will promote an integration that respects the identity of the migrant and preserves the culture of the host community, enriching both at the same time. This is essential. If incomprehension and fear prevail, something in ourselves is damaged; our cultures, history and tradition are weakened, and peace itself is compromised. When instead we favour dialogue and solidarity, at both individual and collective level, it is then that we experience the best of humanity and ensure lasting peace for all, in accordance with the plan of the Creator."

The Pope concluded his address by conveying, through the ambassadors, a fraternal greeting to the pastors and faithful of the Catholic communities in their respective nations. "I encourage them always to be messengers of hope and peace", he said. "I think especially of those Christians and those communities that are numerically a minority, and suffer persecution for their faith; to them I renew my support in prayer and my solidarity. For its part, the Holy See is honoured to be able to strengthen with each one of you, and with the nations you represent, an open and respectful dialogue and a constructive collaboration."
