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Framework agreement between the Holy See and Democratic Republic of the Congo

Vatican City, 20 May 2016 – This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy See and the Democratic Republic of the Congo signed a framework agreement on issues of common interest. It was signed on behalf of the Holy See by Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, secretary for Relations with States, and for the Democratic Republic of the Congo by Raymond Tshibanda N'Tungamulongo, minister for foreign affairs and international cooperation, in the presence of a number of other figures representing both parties.

The framework agreement, composed of a preamble and 21 articles, considering the respective independence and autonomy of the Church and State, and of the good relations between them, provides a legal framework for their mutual relations. In particular, the document establishes the legal position of the Catholic Church in the civil sphere, and its freedom in apostolic activity and in the regulation of matters within its competence. In addition, it regulates various areas including Catholic educational institutions, the teaching of religion in schools, the welfare and charitable activity of the Church, pastoral care of the armed forces and in prison and hospital institutions, the tax and property regime, and the issue of entry visas and stay permits for religious personnel. It provides for implementation agreements between the Episcopal Conference and the State on certain matters of joint interest.

The framework agreement will enter into force upon the exchange of the instruments of ratification.