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Mission of Cor Unum in Ecuador and Colombia

Vatican City, 15 June 2016 – From 16 to 21 June the under-secretary of the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", Msgr. Segundo Tejado Muñoz, will visit the dioceses of Ecuador affected by the earthquake. In mid-April a quake registering 7.8 on the Richter scale struck the area less than two hundred kilometres from the capital Quito, causing – according to the United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs – almost six hundred deaths and thousands of injuries. Several hundred people are missing, while over 21 thousand have been displaced and are in need of immediate shelter, and 150 thousand children have been directly affected.

After urgent first aid sent by "Cor Unum" in the days immediately following the disaster, the mission will provide an opportunity to take a concrete sign of the Holy Father's closeness to the afflicted populations, and to evaluate, along with the apostolic nuncio and the local Churches, eventual interventions on behalf of the Holy See to support the rebuilding of houses, schools and other buildings. Government data show, indeed, that over 1,500 buildings have been destroyed or damaged, while many cities have problems related to the supply of electricity, drinking water, and basic sanitation and health services. In this situation the risk of disease linked to the emergency remains high.

From 21 to 24 May Msgr. Tejado Muñoz will then go to Colombia for the annual meeting of the managing board of the Populorum Progressio Foundation for Latin America, entrusted since its establishment in 1992 by St. John Paul II, to the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum". During the meeting, the board members, who will be called to evaluate and deliberate the funding of projects in favour of the indigenous, mestizo, Afro-American and peasant communities of Latin America and the Caribbean for the year 2016. Around ninety projects have already been presented, for a total sum of approximately 1.5 million dollars, and will be put before the Foundation for evaluation.

So far more than 4,000 projects have been implemented by the Foundation, for a total of around 40 million dollars. The projects are addressed in particular to the sectors of agriculture and animal husbandry, crafts and micro-businesses, infrastructure for drinking water, education and provision of materials for schools, healthcare, building, and so on. One of the greatest supporters of the Populorum Progressio Foundation, aside from individual benefactors, is the Italian Episcopal Conference.

