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Cor Unum: fifth meeting on the humanitarian crisis in Syria and Iraq

On Thursday, 29 September, the fifth meeting on the humanitarian crisis in Syria and Iraq will take place. Promoted by the Pontifical Council “Cor Unum”, it will be attended by around forty Catholic charitable bodies, as well as representatives of the local episcopates, religious congregations that work in the Middle East, and the apostolic nuncios in Syria and Iraq, and will begin at 9.30 a.m. with an audience with the Holy Father in the apostolic palace.

The works will continue in the John Paul II Auditorium of the Pontifical Urbanian University. After the introduction from Msgr. Giampietro Dal Toso, secretary of the Pontifical Council “Cor Unum”, there will be an intervention by Staffan de Mistura, United Nations special envoy for Syria. There will then be the presentation of the Second Survey of the response of the ecclesial network to the Iraqi and Syrian crisis 2015-2016, realised by Cor Unum; and an intervention by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin.

In the afternoon, following an update on the political and humanitarian situation from Archbishop Mario Zenari, apostolic nuncio in Syria, and Archbishop Alberto Ortega, apostolic nuncio in Iraq, the participants will divide into working groups and the meeting will focus on concrete aspects of the collaboration between the various subjects engaged in the Middle East.

The conflict in Syria and Iraq has produced one of the gravest humanitarian crises of recent decades and is the focus of international attention. The Holy See, besides its diplomatic activity, participates actively in aid and humanitarian assistance programmes. The ecclesial network in its entirety has reached for the two-year period 2015-2016 more than nine million individual beneficiaries, mobilising around 207 million dollars for the year 2015 and 196 million dollars in 2016 up to July. Since 2011 the crisis has claimed over 300 million victims and one million other casualties. There are currently more than 13.5 million people in need of assistance in Syria and more than 10 million in Iraq. In Syria there are 8.7 internally displaced persons, and more than 3.4 million in Iraq, and there are 4.8 million Syrian refugees in all the area of the Middle East, especially in Turkey, Libya and Jordan.