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Papal Message from the Secretary of State to the participants in the 13th Conference of the States Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification in Ordos, Inner Mongolia (China, 6-16 September 2017)

The thirteenth session of the Conference of the States Parties (COP 13), the sixteenth session of the Committee for the revision of the implementation of the Convention (CRIC 16) and the thirteenth session of the Commission for Science and Technology (CST 13) are underway in Ordos, Inner Mongolia, at the *Ordos International Convention and Exhibition Center* from 6 to 16 September 2017.

A Papal Message – signed by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin – has been sent to the participants in the Thirteenth Conference of the States Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, the text of which was read by H.E. Joseph Chennoth, apostolic nuncio in Japan and Head of the Holy See Delegation, on Monday 11 September during the solemn opening of the high level session.

Papal Message

His Holiness Pope Francis sends greetings to all gathered in Ordos for the Thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification, with appreciation for their efforts to promote a coordinated approach to this grave ecological crisis of our time. He wishes to thank, in a particular way, the Government and people of China for hosting this important assembly. His Holiness is gratified to see the Conference's concern to awaken interest and commitment on the part of young people for the great enterprise of turning deserts into gardens (cf Is 35:6), and he trusts that they will make their voices heard in calling for a more conscientious implementation of the resolutions of the international community in this regard. In his Encyclical on Care for our Common Home, Pope Francis noted that, due to the bonds of solidarity uniting all the members of the human family", we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment" (*Laudato Si'*, 89) affecting each of us personally. He further observed in his 2013 Easter *Urbi et Orbi* Message how each of us must traverse the desert within, that interior desertification rooted in our failure to love God and neighbour and in the abandonment of our role as guardians of all that the Creator has entrusted to us and continues to give us in every age. For this reason, His Holiness expresses his hope that the Conference, while dealing with specific issues and goals, will

be guided by an integral approach that links desertification to the larger ethical issues of poverty, underdevelopment and intergenerational justice that determine the overall spiritual and moral health of our global community. With prayerful encouragement of the efforts of the Conference to enable our brothers and sisters everywhere to dwell in peace and security, to contribute their gifts to the common good and to develop their full human potential, Pope Francis cordially invokes God 's abundant blessings upon the participants and upon all who support them by their research, expertise and advocacy.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State
