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Message from the Holy Father to the Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum at Davos-Klosters (23-26 January 2018)

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to Professor Klaus Schwab, Executive Chairman of the *World Economic Forum*, taking place in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, from 23 to 26 January, on the theme “Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World”:

Message of the Holy Father

*To Professor Klaus Schwab
Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum*

I am grateful for your invitation to participate in the *World Economic Forum 2018* and for your desire to include the perspective of the Catholic Church and the Holy See at the meeting in Davos. I thank you also for your efforts to bring this perspective to the attention of those gathered for this annual Forum, including the distinguished political and governmental authorities present and all those engaged in the fields of business, the economy, work and culture, as they discuss the challenges, concerns, hopes and prospects of the world today and of the future.

The theme chosen for this year’s Forum – *Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World* – is very timely. I trust that it will assist in guiding your deliberations as you seek better foundations for building inclusive, just and supportive societies, capable of restoring dignity to those who live with great uncertainty and who are unable to dream of a better world.

At the level of global governance, we are increasingly aware that there is a growing fragmentation between States and Institutions. New actors are emerging, as well as new economic competition and regional trade agreements. Even the most recent technologies are transforming economic models and the globalized world itself, which, conditioned by private interests and an ambition for profit at all costs, seem to favour further fragmentation and individualism, rather than to facilitate approaches that are more inclusive.

The recurring financial instabilities have brought new problems and serious challenges that governments must confront, such as the growth of unemployment, the increase in various forms of poverty, the widening of the socio-economic gap and new forms of slavery, often rooted in situations of conflict, migration and various social problems. “Together with this, we encounter certain rather selfish lifestyles, marked by an opulence which is no longer sustainable and frequently indifferent to the world around us, and especially to the poorest of the poor. To our dismay we see technical and economic questions dominating political debate, to the detriment of genuine concern for human beings. Men and women risk being reduced to mere cogs in a machine that treats them as items of consumption to be exploited, with the result that –as is so tragically apparent–whenever a human life no longer proves useful for that machine, it is discarded with few qualms” (*Address to the European Parliament, Strasbourg, 25 November 2014*).

In this context, it is vital to safeguard the dignity of the human person, in particular by offering to all people real opportunities for integral human development and by implementing economic policies that favour the family. “Economic freedom must not prevail over the practical freedom of man and over his rights, and the market must not be absolute, but honour the exigencies of justice” (*Address to the General Confederation of Italian Industry, 27 February 2016*). Economic models, therefore, are also required to observe an ethic of sustainable and integral development, based on values that place the human person and his or her rights at the centre.

“Before the many barriers of injustice, of loneliness, of distrust and of suspicion which are still being elaborated in our day, the world of labour is called upon to take courageous steps in order that ‘being and working together’ is not merely a slogan but a programme for the present and the future”(Ibid.). Only through a firm resolve shared by all economic actors may we hope to give anew direction to the destiny of our world. So too artificial intelligence, robotics and other technological innovations must be so employed that they contribute to the service of humanity and to the protection of our common home, rather than to the contrary, as some assessments unfortunately foresee.

We cannot remain silent in the face of the suffering of millions of people whose dignity is wounded, nor can we continue to move forward as if the spread of poverty and injustice had no cause. It is a moral imperative, a responsibility that involves everyone, to create the right conditions to allow each person to live in a dignified manner. By rejecting a “throwaway” culture and a mentality of indifference, the entrepreneurial world has enormous potential to effect substantial change by increasing the quality of productivity, creating new jobs, respecting labour laws, fighting against public and private corruption and promoting social justice, together with the fair and equitable sharing of profits.

There is a grave responsibility to exercise wise discernment, for the decisions made will be decisive for shaping the world of tomorrow and that of future generations. Thus, if we want a more secure future, one that encourages the prosperity of all, then it is necessary to keep the compass continually oriented towards “true North”, represented by authentic values. Now is the time to take courageous and bold steps for our beloved planet. This is the right moment to put into action our responsibility to contribute to the development of humanity.

I hope, therefore, that this 2018 meeting of the *World Economic Forum* will allow an open, free, and respectful exchange, and be inspired above all else by the desire to advance the common good.

In renewing my best wishes for the success of the meeting, I willingly invoke upon you and all participating in the Forum the divine blessings of wisdom and strength.

From the Vatican, 12 January 2018

FRANCIS

