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Message of the Cardinal Secretary of State to the participants in the Annual Meeting of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ)

The following is the Message sent by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin to the participants in the annual meeting of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), being held in Vienna from 14 to 18 May 2018.

Message of the Cardinal Secretary of State

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

The meeting of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), devoted this year to the issue of "cybercrime", is of great interest and attention on the part of Pope Francis.

Technological progress has brought with it enormous benefits, yet the dark side of our new digital world cannot be underestimated. Among its most serious aspects is the spread of new forms of criminal activity, or of older forms now conducted with new and extremely powerful tools. To combat these effectively is the necessary and pressing task before you.

All of us must be concerned that international development promote the dignity of every human person coming into our world, and enable him or her to grow in a healthy and harmonious way in both body and spirit, in a society that is welcoming and protective.

The United Nations are working to align this joint effort with the Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG). Among its Goals, particular attention is due to No. 16, regarding the promotion of peace, justice and institutions charged with ensuring these. It rightly highlights the urgent need to end all forms of violence against children.

Pope Francis is convinced that a worthy sustainable development can be attained only if children, who are the

future of the human family, are made the centre of attention, and experience encouragement and protection in the years decisive for their growth. At the conclusion of the "World Congress on Child Dignity in the Digital World", held on 6 October last, the Holy Father gave his full support to the "Rome Declaration", which calls upon governments, religious leaders, scholars, technology companies, law enforcement officials, medical institutions, educators and civil society to work together in confronting a problem that no one of them can resolve independently.

The proliferation of ever more extreme images of violence and pornography profoundly affects the psychology and even the neurological functioning of children. Cyberbullying, sexting and sextortion corrupt interpersonal and social relationships. Forms of sexual grooming on the internet, the live viewing of acts of rape and violence, organized prostitution online, human trafficking and incitement to violence and terrorism: all these are clear examples of horrendous crimes that can in no way be tolerated.

The Holy See and the Catholic Church are conscious of their role in forming consciences and raising public awareness. Each in its own way desires to cooperate with political and religious authorities, and all actors in civil society, particularly those who develop and manage new technologies, to ensure that children can grow up in a serene and safe environment. In this effort, within our constantly evolving world the role of the United Nations, and the UNODC in particular, is crucial. For this reason, Pope Francis offers prayerful good wishes for the successful outcome of the work of the Commission and sends cordial greetings to all those taking part.

From the Vatican, 8 May 2018
Cardinal Pietro Parolin Secretary of State
