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Audience with staff of the Office of the Auditor General

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the staff of the Office of the Auditor General.

The following is the text of the address handed by the Pope to those present at the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends,

I greet you and I welcome you, happy to meet you as Holy Christmas approaches.

You belong to a Vatican entity instituted nine years ago, together with others, with the Motu Proprio *Fidelis dispensator et prudens*, with which I wished to undertake some economic reforms, in continuity with the work already begun by Pope Benedict XVI. A body whose functions were then better defined in the subsequent Statutes and reaffirmed in the Apostolic Constitution *Praedicate Evangelium*. Of the various aspects and values that characterize it, I would like to briefly recall three: *independence*, *attention to international practices* and *professionalism*.

First: *independence*. The Office of the Auditor General does not depend hierarchically on other bodies. However, far from meaning arbitrariness, this implies responsibility for action that is always well thought out and inspired by the highest principle of charity. It is important that the spirit of fraternal correction always guides you, even when it is necessary to point out accounting and administrative practices that do not conform to the rules and situations to be corrected. The Word of God teaches us that “the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights” (*Pr* 3:12). Let us remember these words that accompany correction: love and fatherliness, always, without giving in to the temptation of facile protagonism. In this regard, then, it is good to remember, in a synodal spirit, the importance of the collaboration of your Office with the other Dicasteries of the Curia, and in particular with the economic entities, avoiding “competition” that can easily turn into rivalry, even on

a personal level.

Second: *attention to international practices*. It is important to promote the application of the best of these, to promote equity and to be aligned with the rest of the international community, obviously provided that the norms are not contradictory to the teachings of the Church.

Third: *professionalism*. You have a notable professional background, acquired in important organizations. In some cases, this means decades of high-level work experience, and I thank you for deciding to place all this at the service of the Holy See. I know that in order to maintain high professional standards, you invest a great deal in formation, and this is good. Rather, I would say that it is a real moral obligation for you to keep up to date with the constant evolution of the many complex rules governing auditing.

Moreover, the Office of the Auditor General is one of the *Anti-Corruption Authorities* under the Mérida Convention, to which the Holy See acceded in 2016 also on behalf of the Vatican City State. Certainly, those who work at the Holy See and the Vatican City State do so faithfully and honestly, but the lure of corruption is so dangerous that we must be very vigilant. I know that you devote a great deal of attention to this, with work that is managed with both firmness and merciful discretion because, without prejudice to the need for absolute transparency in every action, scandals serve more to fill the pages of the newspapers than to correct behaviour in depth. In addition to this, I invite you to help those responsible for the administration of the Holy See's assets to create safeguards that can prevent, "upstream", the very insidiousness of corruption from materializing.

Dear friends, I want to add something that goes beyond your work. I know that some of you serve in the Caritas soup kitchen. It is a beautiful thing, and I say to you: do so with an open heart, with simplicity and gratuity, and find the time to talk with these people and to listen to their stories. Often, we encounter people who need friendship, but who are left by themselves. Many times, a smile and a word are worth more than a dish of pasta.

Thank you for your work, and best wishes to you and your families for Christmas. And please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.
