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**Audience with the prime minister of Timor-Leste: collaboration of the Church and civil authorities in education, healthcare and the fight against poverty**

Vatican City, 3 March 2016 – This morning in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, Rui Maria de Araújo, who subsequently met with Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, accompanied by the under-secretary for Relations with States, Msgr. Antoine Camilleri.

During the cordial discussions, the good relations between the Holy See and Timor-Leste were evoked, as well as the historical contribution of the Church to building up the nation and collaboration with the civil Authorities in various social areas, such as education, health and the fight against poverty.

At the end of the meeting with the Secretary of State, in the Hall of Treaties in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, there took place the exchange of instruments for the ratification of the Accord between the Holy See and the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, signed in Dili on 14 August 2015. The Accord, composed of a Preamble and 26 articles, decrees the recognition of the legal personality of the Church and her Institutions, and guarantees to the Church the freedom to carry out her mission in favour of the Timorese population.

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