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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 160601d

Wednesday 01.06.2016

Christians and Jains: cooperating in defending the Earth, home of the human family

Vatican City, 1 June 2016 – The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) has issued a press communiqué stating that a meeting took place between the PCID and an International Jain delegation on 31 May in the offices of the dicastery. The respective delegations were led by Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the PCID, and Nemu Chandaria, chairman of the Institute of Jainology. It was the third meeting of this type; the previous two were held in 1995 and 2011. There have also been several contacts between the Jain community and the PCID since 1986, and the PCID, in collaboration with the local churches and Jain organisations in India, the United Kingdom and the United States, organised Jain-Catholic dialogue meetings in 2011, 2013 and 2015.

In yesterday's meeting, held in an atmosphere of mutual respect and friendship, members of the delegations expressed satisfaction with the cordial relations and cooperation that exist between both the Christian and Jain communities in countries where they live in close proximity. While expressing the desire to further deepen cooperation, the delegations agreed that it must be increasingly strengthened at local level to better contribute towards the common good of society. In particular, they stressed the importance of educating younger generations so that they may be aware of their own traditions, and come to know and better respect the traditions of others.

With an aim to identifying concrete areas of convergence as the basis of cooperation, they discussed "Taking care of the Earth, the home of the human family", emphasising the need for both Jains and Christians to work together, joining hands with all believers and people of good will to make the Earth liveable and peaceful for all.

They reflected on the Jain principle of "non-violence" (Ahimsa) towards all forms of life and that of Christian "compassion" and "justice" for the poorest and most vulnerable people by calling for responsible stewardship of the natural world. They found common elements that can motivate and advance cooperation between Jains and Catholics.

They also recognised that these elements, on a practical level, call upon the followers of both religious traditions to promote respect for the environment, non-exploitation of natural resources, reduction of wastefulness, care for all forms of life and concern for future generations.