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Cor Unum seminar to assist the population of Syria

Vatican City, 30 June 2016 – The Pontifical Council "Cor Unum", in collaboration with the Catholic Relief Service, Aid to the Church in Need and Missio, has organised a seminar to be held from 29 June to 2 July near Beirut, Lebanon, for diocesan staff in Syria dedicated to charitable service in the context of the humanitarian crisis that the country is currently experiencing. It will be attended by eleven bishops, representatives of religious institutes for men and women, and people working in the charitable sector from various dioceses. "Cor Unum" will be represented by the secretary of the dicastery, Msgr. Giampietro Dal Toso, and the apostolic nuncio in Syria, Archbishop Mario Zenari, will also participate.

The initiative originated from a request presented by the representatives of charitable organisations and bishops during the third meeting on the humanitarian crisis in Syria, Iraq and bordering countries, organised by "Cor Unum" in 2015. The aim of the current seminar is to examine the basic elements in order to implement the charitable and humanitarian aid projects for the Middle East, drawn up by these bodies and by national dioceses. The programme, aside from theological formation, also involves specific encountersfor bishops and religious, as well as sessions for technical diocesan staff, dedicated to the analysis of project methods in the humanitarian field. On the days 1 and 2 July, the focus will shift to the specific aspects of capacity-building and project management, and implementation phases: programming, planning, implementation, conclusion and evaluation.

The crisis in Syria, Iraq and neighbouring countries continues to be at the centre of the concerns of the Holy See and the international community, due to the serious consequences of the war. According to available data, since 2011 the conflict in Syria has claimed around 400,000 victims and has injured two million. There are currently more than twelve million people in need of aid in Syria, and more than eight million in Iraq; there are more than six million internally displaced people in Syria and more than three million in Iraq, and there are at least four million Syrian refugees in all the Middle East area: in particular, 1.9 million in Turkey, 1.1 million in Lebanon, and more than 600,000 in Jordan.

From the first Survey of humanitarian aid by ecclesial entities in the context of the Syrian and Iraqi crisis for the year 2014 to 2015, produced by "Cor Unum" last September, it emerges that in 2015 the Catholic Church succeeded in raising more than 150 million dollars to assist more than five million direct beneficiaries, while the sectors for priority intervention so far have been education (more than 25 million dollars), food aid (more than 30

million dollars), non-food provisions (around 25 million dollars), healthcare (around 16 million dollars), and support for accommodation and rents (more than 10 million dollars). The survey regarding the period 2015 to 2016 is currently being produced.