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Trip of the Substitute of the Secretariat of State to Malaysia for the inauguration of the new Nunciature in Kuala Lumpur

The following is the address of greetings pronounced today by Archbishop Giovanni Angelo Becciu, substitute of the Secretariat of State, at the inauguration of the new Apostolic Nunciature in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia:

Address of greetings of H.E. Msgr. G. Angelo Becciu

Your Eminence, My Brother Bishops,
Dear Priests and Religious,
Your Excellencies, distinguished Civil Authorities
and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here today and to convey to all of you the cordial greetings of His Holiness Pope Francis as we gather for the inauguration of the new offices and residence of the Apostolic Nunciature in Malaysia. I greet in particular Cardinal Anthony Soter Fernandez and Bishop Sebastian Francis, President of the Bishops' Conference, together with His Excellency [the Deputy Foreign Minister], here representing the Prime Minister and the members of the federal government. In a special way I bring the greetings of Pope Francis to His Majesty Sultan Muhammad V, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong XV. The building we dedicate today has been made possible by the support of the Bishops' Conference and of all those who are convinced of the importance and significance of establishing a permanent site of the Apostolic Nunciature in Malaysia. To all I express His Holiness's heartfelt gratitude.

In this structure, which symbolizes the friendly ties between Malaysia and the Holy See, I would like to offer some brief reflections on the importance of that relationship. The new Nunciature is a sign of the Holy See's international mission and its solicitude for the Catholic community in this nation, as well as for the good of all the Malaysian people. Our meeting reminds us of the importance of both diplomatic relations and religious values for building harmony and peace within the human family.

The Church's activity in the international community is inspired by the Gospel precept that calls us to love God and neighbour. It finds expression in efforts to encourage peace-making through the promotion of dialogue and mutual understanding, respect for the dignity and rights of the human person, and commitment to integral human development and progress. It also includes concern for the proper care of our natural and human habitat, as an essential part of our collective responsibility towards our common home. In this regard, I am pleased that the new Nunciature has been built according to the principles of Malaysia's Green Building Index. It thus represents a modest but real contribution to that *integral ecology* advocated by Pope Francis in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*.

An Apostolic Nunciature can be thought of as a kind of conduit. It allows the cares, concerns and needs of the local Churches and communities to be shared with the Pope, and in turn allows his pastoral concern for all parts of the world to find effective expression. As you know, the universal ministry of the Pope is an expression of the Church's solicitude for all humanity. Her contribution ranges from practical concern for the poor, to aid in healthcare and education, and to the cultural, intellectual and spiritual enrichment of society. While respecting the variety of competences found within the social, cultural and economic spheres, the Church seeks to offer insights and values helpful in promoting liberty, justice and peace within the family of nations.

This inauguration ceremony reminds us that physical structures and legal frameworks are important and necessary components in the work of diplomacy. Yet its foundation stones are individual persons, each endowed with specific and complementary qualities and gifts that contribute to the delicate art of peace-building and the promotion of the common good. Malaysia's involvement in the ASEAN organization, for example, and the Holy See's assistance in the area of mediation between nations, depend on the contribution of committed diplomats.

In this regard, I would like to acknowledge the work of Archbishop Joseph Marino, the first Apostolic Nuncio to Malaysia, as well as his dedicated staff. I think too of His Excellency Bernard Giluk Dompok, Malaysia's first resident Ambassador to the Holy See, who played an important role in the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2011 – the year that saw the significant visit of the Prime Minister to His Holiness Benedict XVI.

The Holy See regards with respect the richly diverse religious and cultural heritage of the Malaysian people. As in other countries with multi-cultural communities, such diversity – rather than an obstacle to solidarity – can be a positive stimulus to greater dialogue and mutual understanding. Malaysia's Federal Constitution, while expressing the importance of Islam to national identity, has enshrined the values of equality and freedom of religion. These fundamental human rights are vital building blocks for ensuring harmony and friendship between people of different customs and traditions.

Harmony, unity and solidarity are built up by practical steps and signs of good will. As Pope Francis often emphasises, love has no boundaries, and all concrete acts to support others actively, help to remove barriers that divide people, forge bridges of social harmony, and sow seeds of concord within and between communities. An essential role in this process is played by education. The Church's commitment to the education of the young serves not only the local Catholic community, but also represents a contribution to the wider good of Malaysian society. A sound education will encourage that culture of encounter that privileges dialogue, mutual understanding and solidarity as the way to peace.

Dear friends:

The inauguration of this new Nunciature, and the desire of Malaysia and the Holy See to deepen the friendly ties we enjoy, are signs of our shared goal: to construct a more fraternal world where concord, justice and peace can flourish.

It is an honour for me to be present at this auspicious moment in relations between Malaysia and the Holy See and to renew the prayerful good wishes of Pope Francis that all will find here, in "Peter's house", a friendly welcome and words of encouragement. I entrust this building, and all who carry out their service within it, to the care and protection of the Almighty.

Thank you very much!
