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**Message of the Holy Father to the participants in the Fourth International Conference for World Balance, Havana, 28-31 January**

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the Fourth *International Conference for World Balance*, organized by the José Martí International Solidarity Project, taking place in the *Palacio de Convenciones* in Havana, Cuba, from 28 to 31 January 2019:

**Message of the Holy Father**

Distinguished delegates,

I cordially greet the participants in this International conference for World Balance, which is being held in Havana, as part of the commemorations for a date that is very significant for this country, the birth of José Martí; and whose purpose is to unite wills to contribute through fruitful dialogue to the strengthening of bonds of fraternity among nations.

It is easy to see how various occurrences on the planet have contributed significantly to the endangerment of the balance of our current civilization. For this reason, men of good will should join and meet in events of this nature, in a context of plurality, to achieve authentic human promotion, aware also that “those who are committed to defending human dignity can find in the Christian faith the deepest reasons for this commitment” (Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, 65).

The human environment and the natural environment go hand in hand, and can deteriorate together. Environmental degradation cannot be adequately faced if we do not understand the causes associated with human and social degradation (cf. *ibid*, 48). For this reason, as I previously remarked during my pastoral visit to Cuba, it is necessary to cultivate, especially among the young, a “culture of encounter” through the promotion of “social friendship” (cf. *Greeting to young people*, Havana, 20 September 2015), which brings us together with the common goal of promoting people.

I encourage you to seek effective alternatives, in line with the thought of José Martí, a “man of light”, as Saint John Paul II defined him during his visit to Cuba (*Meeting with the world of culture*, Havana, 23 January 1998). May the teachings of this Cuban master and writer resonate within us and remind us, with his words, that “all the trees of the world will concentrate on one, which will give eternally a very mild aroma: it is the tree of love, with such robust and copious branches, that in its name, all men will be smiling and in peace” (*Complete works*, vol. 5, 103).

I hope that these days of work and reflection will bear fruits of understanding and dialogue, in the attainment of an increasingly fraternal civilization.

Vatican, 17 January 2019

Francis

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