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Press Release of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development on the Meeting of the Management Board of the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel

The Management Board of the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel, which this year celebrates 35 years since its inception, will hold its annual meeting from 18 to 22 February in Dakar, Senegal. Since 1984, at the behest of Saint John Paul II, the Foundation has been entrusted to the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, whose competences have been incorporated by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. The Prefect of the Dicastery, Cardinal Peter K.A. Turkson, will take part in the meeting of the Management Board. During the meeting, the Board will also be called to examine projects awaiting financing. A total of 125 projects have been presented for 2018.

The members of the Board are: H.E. Msgr. Lucas Kalfa Sanou, bishop of Banfora, Burkina Faso, Chairman of the Board of Directors; H.E. Msgr. Paul Abel Mamba, bishop of Ziguinchor, Senegal, vice-president; H.E. Msgr. Martin Albert Happe, bishop of Nouakchott, Mauritania, treasurer; H.E. Msgr. Ambroise Ouédraogo, bishop of Maradi, Niger; H.E. Msgr. Ildo Augusto dos Santos Lopes Fortes, bishop of Mindelo, Cape Verde; H.E. Msgr. Martin Waïngue Bani, bishop of Doba, Chad; H.E. Msgr. Gabriel Mendy, C.S.Sp., bishop of Banjul, Gambia; H.E. Msgr. José Câmnate na Bissign, bishop of Bissau, Guinea Bissau; H.E. Msgr. Augustin Traoré, bishop of Segou, Mali.

The Sahel area is one of the poorest in the world, affected by frequent climatic and food crises and, in recent years, it has become one of the main basins for the training of terrorist groups. According to the most recent update of the Human Development Index 2018, among the last 20 countries in the ranking 19 belong to Africa and, of these, 6 are located right in the area between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea, south of the Sahara desert.

On behalf of the Holy Father, and with the collaboration of the Church and local communities, the Foundation carries out projects to counter desertification, in the environmental sector, for the management and development of agriculture and animal husbandry, for water pumping plants, improving access to drinking water for all, and renewable energy. It also engages in the training of specialized technical personnel, able to place themselves at the service of their country.

Over time the Foundation has become a tool for inter-religious dialogue: the majority of beneficiaries, in fact, are of the Muslim religion. And in the last year, for the first time, projects related to the theme of migration were presented, to offer to young people in particular concrete alternatives focused on training and the generation of sources of income. All activities are carried out to promote the integral human development of the communities belonging to the member countries of the Foundation itself (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Chad).

The major supporters and collaborators in the implementation of aid are the Italian Episcopal Conference, the German Episcopal Conference and the archdiocese of Munich.
