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Address of the Substitute of the Section for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State for the opening of the Apostolic Nunciature in the United Arab Emirates

The opening ceremony of the Apostolic Nunciature in the United Arab Emirates, on the International Day of Human Fraternity, is underway in Abu Dhabi.

The following is the address that Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra, substitute of the Section for General Affairs of the Secretariat of State, accompanied on the trip by Msgr. Yoannis Gaid, member of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, former personal secretary to Pope Francis, will deliver during the ceremony:

Address of Archbishop Edgar Peña Parra

Your Highness
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by conveying the cordial greetings and spiritual closeness of His Holiness Pope Francis to all present, together with his best wishes for the recent celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of founding of this dear country.

The presence of this new Apostolic Nunciature is a further sign of the Holy Father's solicitude and concern for all the dear people in this land. As I had occasion to remark in similar circumstances, it is for this reason that Apostolic Nunciatures are often affectionately referred to as the House of the Pope. The same is certainly true for this place, as it is Pope Francis' sincere desire that this edifice will assist the Papal Representative in carrying out his mission to the United Arab Emirates and to the local Catholic community and the dialogue between religions.

The inauguration of this Diplomatic Representation of the Holy See demonstrates the good bilateral relations

that already exist between the United Arab Emirates and the Holy See. In this regard, I would also highlight that this year marks the fifteenth anniversary of diplomatic relations. I am convinced that the relationship formed over this period is based on a mutual understanding of the importance of faith and the positive role that religion should play in society. This was affirmed three years ago today, during Pope Francis' Apostolic Journey to this country when he and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, signed the landmark Document on *Human Fraternity: For World Peace and Living Together*.

The Document speaks eloquently of the elements that unite Muslims and Christians, based on a shared belief in God the Creator of all things. From this stems the call for believers to live in fraternity with all people regardless of race, religion or creed and to safeguard creation, our common home. Contrary to any distortion or manipulation of religion, the response to this call can be nothing other than choosing the path of dialogue, which leads to better mutual understanding and cooperation.

In signing the document, the Grand Imam and the Pope expressed their desire that "it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters" (*Introduction*). It is my hope that it will also serve as a framework for deepening our diplomatic relations. In moving forward, therefore, let us intensify our efforts to promote the contents of the document in order to help build a more just and peaceful world. These efforts are truly needed today as we continue to see the negative consequences of replacing transcendent truths about the human person and creation with purely superficial and materialistic values.

On this joyous occasion, my thoughts naturally turn to the Catholic community in the country. As the House of the Pope in the United Arab Emirates, the Apostolic Nunciature also manifests the Holy Father's pastoral care for them. May this place be a source of encouragement to them as they strive to live their faith and be examples of human fraternity to all their brothers and sisters in this dear land.

In conclusion, I would like to thank His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of United Arab Emirates, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, His Excellency Noora Al Kaabi – Minister of Culture and Youth, His Excellency Omar Ghobash – Assistant Minister for Cultural Affairs. His Excellency Bishop Paul Hinder, Apostolic Vicar for Southern Arabia, and all of our distinguished guests for your presence on this special occasion. I also offer sincere gratitude to the Civil Authorities for their efforts in helping the Holy See obtain this beautiful edifice.

I am particularly grateful to Monsignor Kryspin Dubiel, Chargé d'Affaires of this Apostolic Nunciature, and to all those who helped make this desire of the Holy Father a reality.

Finally, I am very happy that the opening of this Apostolic Nunciature takes place on the same day of the third anniversary of the Pope Francis' Apostolic Journey to this dear country and the signature of the Document of *Human Fraternity*. May this new Embassy of the Holy See in Abu Dhabi serve as a place of encounter and dialogue for our bilateral cooperation for many years to come!

Thank you!
