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Message of the Holy Father to the participants in the conference “Resilience of People and Ecosystems under Climate Stress”

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to the participants in the conference promoted by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on the theme “Resilience of People and Ecosystems under Climate Stress”, taking place in the Casina Pio IV on 13 and 14 July 2022:

Message of the Holy Father

To the Participants in

the Conference on Resilience of People

and Ecosystems under Climate Stress

I offer cordial greetings to the organizers and participants in the Conference on *Resilience of People and Ecosystems under Climate Stress* sponsored by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. I thank His Eminence Cardinal Peter Turkson, Chancellor of the Academy, His Excellency Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo and all those responsible for making this gathering possible.

The phenomenon of climate change has become an emergency that no longer remains at the margins of society. Instead, it has assumed a central place, reshaping not only industrial and agricultural systems but also adversely affecting the global human family, especially the poor and those living on the economic peripheries of our world. Nowadays we are facing two challenges: lessening climate risks by reducing emissions and assisting and enabling people to adapt to progressively worsening changes to the climate. These challenges call us to think of a multi-dimensional approach to protecting both individuals and our planet.

The Christian faith offers a particular contribution in this regard. The Book of Genesis tells us that the Lord saw

that all he had made was very good (cf. *Gen* 1:31) and entrusted human beings with the responsibility of being stewards of his gift of creation (cf. *Gen* 2:15). In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus reinforces the goodness of the natural world by reminding us of God's care for all his creatures (cf. *Mt* 6:26.28-29). In light of these biblical teachings, then, care for our common home, even apart from considerations of the effects of climate change, is not simply a utilitarian endeavour but a moral obligation for all men and women as children of God. With this in mind, each of us must ask: "What kind of world do we want for ourselves and for those who will come after us"?

To help answer that question, I have spoken of an "ecological conversion" (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 216-221) which demands a change of mentality and a commitment to work for the resilience of people and the ecosystems in which they live. This conversion has three important spiritual elements that I would offer for your consideration. The first entails gratitude for God's loving and generous gift of creation. The second calls for acknowledging that we are joined in a universal communion with one another and with the rest of the world's creatures. The third involves addressing environmental problems not as isolated individuals but in solidarity as a community.

On the basis of these elements, courageous, cooperative and far-sighted efforts among religious, political, social and cultural leaders on local, national and international levels are needed in order to find concrete solutions to the severe and increasing problems we are facing. I am thinking, for example, of the role that the most economically advantaged nations can play in reducing their own emissions and providing financial as well as technological assistance so that less prosperous areas of the world may follow their example. Also crucial is access to clean energy and drinkable water, support given to farmers around the world to shift to climate resilient agriculture, a commitment to sustainable paths of development and to sober lifestyles aimed at preserving the world's natural resources and the provision of education and healthcare to the poorest and most vulnerable of the global population.

Here I would also mention two additional concerns: the loss of biodiversity (cf. *Laudato Si'* 32-33) and the many wars being waged in various regions of the world that together bring with them harmful consequences for human survival and wellbeing, including problems of food security and increasing pollution. These crises, along with that of the earth's climate, show that "everything is connected" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 34) and that promoting the long-term common good of our planet is essential to genuine ecological conversion.

For the above-mentioned reasons, I have recently approved for the Holy See, in the name and on behalf of Vatican City State, to accede to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement, with the hope that "although the post-industrial period may well be remembered as one of the most irresponsible in history, nonetheless there is reason to hope that humanity at the dawn of the twenty-first century will be remembered for having generously shouldered its grave responsibilities" (*Laudato Si'*, 165).

Dear brothers and sisters, I am pleased that your work in these days is dedicated to examining the impact of changes in our climate and seeking practical solutions that can be implemented promptly in order to increase the resilience of people and ecosystems. In working together, men and women of good will can address the scale and complexity of the issues that lie before us, protect the human family and God's gift of creation from climate extremes and foster the goods of justice and peace.

With the assurance of my prayers that your Conference will bear good fruit, I invoke upon all of you the abundant blessings of Almighty God.

From the Vatican, 13 July 2022

FRANCIS
