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Message of the Holy Father to participants in the Eighth “Rome MED Dialogues” Conference (1 to 3 December 2022)

The following is the Holy Father Francis’ Message to participants in the Eighth *Rome MED Dialogues* Conference, taking place in Rome from 1 to 3 December 2022:

Message of the Holy Father

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen!

A warm greeting to you all on the occasion of the Eighth *Rome MED Dialogues* Conference, which has for several years constituted an event promoted by the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and by the Institute for International Policy Studies, with the aim of promoting shared policies in the Mediterranean area.

The method of this Conference is in and of itself significant and important; namely, the commitment to dialogue, exchange, common reflection, the search for solutions or even only coordinated approaches to what are – and cannot but be – the common interest of the peoples who, in the diversity of their respective cultures – look out onto the *mare nostrum*. A sea that, in its history as *medium terrarium*, has a vocation for progress, development and culture that unfortunately seems to have been lost in the recent past, and that needs to be recovered fully and with conviction.

Indeed, the Mediterranean has the great potential to bring three continents into contact: a connection that historically, also through migration, has been immensely fruitful. It is bordered by Africa, Asia and Europe, but too often we forget that the lines that delimit are also those that connect, and that the ambivalence of the term “border” can also allude to a common end: *cum-finis*. This is an aspect that the civilizations that preceded us, and of which the Mediterranean was the cradle, were well aware. It is with regret that we must note that this same sea, today, struggles to be experienced as a place of encounter, exchange, sharing and collaboration. And yet, at the same time, it is precisely at this crossroads of humanity that many opportunities await us. We must

therefore revive the culture of encounter from which we have benefited so much, and not only in the past. In this way it will be possible to rebuild a sense of fraternity, developing, beyond more just economic relations, also more human relationships, including those with migrants.

This Conference has the merit of relaunching the centrality of the Mediterranean, through the exchange of an agenda that is particularly rich in topics ranging from themes of geopolitics and security to the protection of the fundamental freedoms of the person, the challenge of migration, and to the climate and environmental crises.

The importance and multiplicity of the topics submitted for your consideration demands a basic consideration. This variety is itself already significant of how ethical and social themes cannot be detached from the many situations of geopolitical crisis and also from environmental issues themselves. The idea of facing the individual themes in a sectoral way, separately and unrelated to the others is, in this sense, misguided thinking. Indeed, it carries the risk of reaching partial and flawed solutions that not only fail to resolve problems, but also make them chronic.

I think in particular of the failure to find common solutions to human mobility in the region, which continues to lead to an inadmissible and almost always avoidable loss of human lives, especially in the Mediterranean. Migration is essential for the wellbeing of this area, and cannot be stopped. Therefore, it is in the interest of all parties to find a solution that encompasses the various aspects and the just demands, that is advantageous to all, and that guarantees both human dignity and shared prosperity.

The interconnectedness of the issues demands that they are examined together, with a coordinated vision that is as wide-ranging as possible, as has become overwhelmingly apparent during the crisis of the pandemic, a further clear confirmation that no-one is saved alone.

This globalization of issues is repeated today with regard to the dramatic military conflict underway in Europe, between Russia and Ukraine, which in addition to the incalculable damage caused by any war in terms of victims, civilian and military, has given rise to the energy crisis, the financial crisis, the humanitarian crisis for many innocent people forced to leave their own homes and to lose their most cherished possessions, and the food crisis, afflicting a growing number of people throughout the world, especially in the poorest countries. The Ukrainian conflict is in fact having enormous repercussions in the North African countries, which depend on Ukraine and Russia for 80% of their grain. This crisis urges us to take into consideration the whole situation from a global perspective, just as the effects are global. Thus, just as it is unthinkable to tackle the energy crisis separately from the political one, at the same time it is not possible to resolve the food crisis in isolation from the persistence of conflicts, or the climate crisis without taking into account the migration problem, or the relief of the most fragile economies, or the protection of fundamental freedoms. Nor can we consider the vastness of human suffering without taking into account the social crisis, where, for economic or political gain, the value of the human person is diminished and human rights are trampled underfoot.

We must all acquire an ever-greater awareness of the fact that the cry of our mistreated planet is inseparable from the cry of suffering humanity. In this regard, Saint Paul's words in the Letter to the Romans, around two thousand years ago, resonate

In this regard, the words of Saint Paul in his Letter to the Romans, some two thousand years ago, resonate to this day, where he presents the common destiny of humanity and of creation, which - says the Apostle - nurtures the hope that it too will be freed from the bondage of corruption, to enter into the freedom of the glory of the children of God, for which all of creation groans and suffers the pangs of labour until now (cf. 8:21-22).

This is not only an otherworldly objective, but also the purpose of the commitment of men and women of goodwill. May it also be the aim of your dialogues! With this hope I wish you peaceful and fruitful work, assuring you of my prayer and invoking God's blessing upon you all.

From the Vatican, 1 December 2022

