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Audience with participants in the Meeting on Indigenous Peoples, organized by the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the Meeting on Indigenous Peoples, organized by the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences, on the theme “Indigenous Peoples’ Knowledge and the Sciences. Combining knowledge and sciences on vulnerabilities and solutions for resilience”, taking place in the Vatican at the Casina Pio IV, from 14 to 15 March 2024.

The following is the address prepared by the Pope for the occasion, which was read out by Fr. Pierluigi Girolì:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear friends!

I offer you a warm welcome on the occasion of this Workshop on *Indigenous Peoples’ Knowledge and the Sciences*, which aims to join these two forms of knowledge for the sake of a more comprehensive, rich and humane approach to a number of urgent critical issues, including climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and threats to food and health security.

I thank the Chancellor, Cardinal Turkson, and the Presidents of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and of Social Sciences for having sponsored this initiative: it makes a significant contribution to acknowledging the great value of the wisdom of native peoples and to advancing an integral and sustainable human development.

I would note that three years ago the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held study days on indigenous food systems. This gave rise to a platform that has brought together indigenous and non-indigenous scientists, students and experts in order to pursue a dialogue aimed at ensuring the protection of indigenous peoples’ food systems. In line with that experience, I appreciate your own initiative, which

contributes to this effort.

I would say before all else that your Workshop represents an opportunity to *grow in reciprocal listening*: listening to indigenous peoples, in order to learn from their wisdom and from their lifestyles, and at the same time listening to scientists, in order to benefit from their research.

This study seminar also sends a message *to government leaders and to international organizations*, encouraging them to acknowledge and respect the rich diversity within the great human family. The fabric of humanity is woven with a variety of cultures, traditions, spiritualities and languages that must be protected, since their loss would represent an impoverishment of knowledge, identity and memory for all of us. For this reason, projects of scientific research, and accordingly investments, ought to be directed decisively to the promotion of *human fraternity*, justice and peace, so that resources can be coordinated and allocated to respond to the urgent challenges facing the earth, our common home, and the family of peoples.

We have come to understand that, in order to realize this goal, a conversion is required, an *alternative vision* to the one that is presently driving our world to increased conflict. Meetings like your own are important in this regard: indeed, open dialogue between indigenous knowledge and the sciences, between communities of ancestral wisdom and those of the sciences, can help to confront in a new, more integral and more effective way such crucial issues as water, climate change, hunger and biodiversity. These issues, as we know very well, are all interconnected.

Thanks be to God, there is no lack of positive signs in this regard, such as the United Nations' inclusion of indigenous knowledge as a core component of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development. This is a sign that should be encouraged and supported by joining forces. In the dialogue between indigenous knowledge and science, we need to keep clearly in mind that this entire patrimony of knowledge should be employed as a means of overcoming conflicts in a nonviolent manner and combating poverty and the new forms of slavery. God, the Creator and Father of all peoples and of everything that exists, calls us today to live out and bear witness to our human call to universal fraternity, freedom, justice, dialogue, reciprocal encounter, love and peace, and to avoid fueling hatred, resentment, division, violence and war.

God has made us stewards, not masters of the planet: all of us are called to an ecological conversion (cf. *Laudato Si*, 216-221), a commitment to saving our common home and to fostering intergenerational solidarity in order to preserve the life of future generations, rather than wasting resources and aggravating inequality, exploitation and destruction.

Dear representatives of indigenous communities and dear men and women of science, I thank you for your efforts and I encourage you to draw from the patrimony of the wisdom of your forebears and from the fruits of your scientific research the vital energy needed to continue to cooperate in the service of truth, freedom, dialogue, justice and peace. The Church is with you, an ally of the indigenous peoples and their wisdom, and an ally of science in striving to make our world one of ever greater fraternity and social friendship.

I accompany you with my prayers and, in respect for the convictions of each, I invoke upon you God's blessing. I ask you, in your own way, also to pray for me. Thank you.
