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Audience with participants in the Consultation “Care is work, work is care” of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the Consultation “Care is work, work is care” of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, to whom he delivered the following address:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

On this occasion of your meeting, I am pleased to welcome all of you, as partners of the International Labour Organization, Episcopal Conferences and Religious Congregations, Catholic and other denominational organizations, trade unions and other grassroots groups engaged in the project “The Future of Work: Labour after *Laudato Si’*”.

Over the past six years, you have engaged in reflection, dialogue and research, proposing innovative models of action for fair, just and dignified work for all people in our world. I thank the Superiors of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development for their encouragement of these efforts. I also thank the International Catholic Migration Commission, which has worked to coordinate and manage the project. Thank you so much!

In the coming days, your gathering will focus on the theme *“Care is Work, Work is Care”. Building a Global Transformative Community*. This will enable you to advance to the second phase of the project, employing the method of shared social discernment. There is a real need to pool all our personal and institutional resources in order to attempt an adequate interpretation of the social context in which we move, seeking to grasp its potential while, at the same time, recognizing in advance those systemic ills that can become social plagues.

You have identified five issues of crucial importance for society as a whole. I would like to mention them briefly.

First of all, *dignified work and mining industries*. As I observed, also in the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the export of some raw materials for the sole purpose of satisfying the markets of the industrialized North has not been without consequences, some of them quite serious, including mercury or sulphur dioxide pollution in mines. It is essential that working conditions and environmental impact be linked, with close attention to eventual consequences for the physical and mental health of those involved, as well as their safety.

A second theme is *dignified work and food security*. The recently published Global Food Crisis Report found that by 2023 more than 280 million people in 59 countries and several territories were suffering from high levels of acute food insecurity, requiring urgent relief efforts. Nor do we need to mention that war-torn areas such as Gaza and Sudan are home to the greatest number of people facing famine. Natural disasters and extreme weather conditions, now intensified by climate change, are, together with economic upheavals, further important drivers of food insecurity, which in turn are connected to structural vulnerabilities such as poverty, high dependence on food imports and poor infrastructure.

We must not overlook a third issue, which concerns the relationship between *dignified work and migration*. For a variety of reasons, many people emigrate in search of work, while others do so because they find themselves forced to flee their countries of origin, often rent by violence and poverty. These persons, also due to prejudices and inaccurate or ideological information, are often viewed as a problem and an economic burden, while in reality, by their work, they are contributing to the economic and social development of their host country and their country of origin. Here I would like to emphasize the low birth rate. These rich countries are not having children: everyone has a small dog or a cat, everyone, but they do not have children. The decreasing birth-rate is a problem, and migration helps to respond to the crisis that causes it. This is a very serious problem. Even so, many migrants and vulnerable workers do not have all their rights respected, they are “second class citizens” as they are excluded from access to health services, care, assistance, financial planning and psychosocial services.

From this standpoint, it is also important to focus on the relationship between *dignified work and social justice*. This expression, “social justice”, which came from the papal social Encyclicals, is a word that is not accepted by the liberal and leading economies. Indeed, a risk we run in our present-day societies is that of passively accepting what is taking place all around us, either out of a certain indifference or simply because we are not in a position to frame the often complex issues and find adequate responses to them. This, however, means that we permit social inequalities and injustices to grow, also where labour relations and workers' fundamental rights are involved. And that is not good!

The final aspect you have considered is that of *dignified work and a just ecological transition*. Taking into account the interdependence between work and the environment, there is a need to rethink the kinds of work that ought to be promoted for the sake of care for our common home, especially in terms of the sources of energy that they require.

Dear friends, dear brothers and sisters, these five aspects represent significant challenges. I thank you for accepting those challenges and addressing them with passion and competence. The world needs renewed commitment, a new social compact that can bind us together, older and younger generations, for the care of creation and for solidarity and mutual protection within the human community. May God bless you and your work in these days! I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me, for this job is not easy! Thank you!