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Audience with participants in the International Conference organized by the “Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice” Foundation

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the International Conference organized by the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice* Foundation, taking place in Rome at the Pontifical Patristic Institute “Augustinianum” from 20 to 22 June, on the theme “Artificial Intelligence and the technocratic paradigm: how to promote the wellbeing of humanity, care for nature and a world of peace”.

The following is the address delivered by the Pope to those present at the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your Eminence, Your Excellency’s, Brothers and sisters, good morning!

I greet with gratitude your President, Dr Anna Maria Tarantola, and I offer a warm welcome to all of you who are taking part in the annual International Conference of the *Centesimus Annus Pro Pontifice* Foundation, on the theme: “Generative Artificial Intelligence and Technocratic Paradigm: How to Promote the Wellbeing of Humanity, Care for Nature and a World of Peace.”

This topic is one worthy of particular attention since AI is dramatically influencing the economy and social life, and can have a negative impact on the quality of life, interpersonal and international relations, global stability and our common home.

As you know, I dealt with technological development in my Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’* and my Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*. I also discussed AI in this year’s World Day of Peace Message and, a few days ago, in my address at the G7.

I am pleased that the *Centesimus Annus* Foundation is giving ample attention to this issue, engaging scholars and experts from different countries and disciplines in analyzing the opportunities and numerous risks associated with the development and use of AI, through a cross-disciplinary approach and above all from a human-centred standpoint, conscious of the risk of reinforcing the technocratic paradigm.

An interdisciplinary analysis is in fact essential in order to grasp all the current and future aspects of AI, its potential advantages in terms of productivity and growth, as well as the risks it poses, and to develop ethical approaches to its growth, use, and management.

In this year's World Day of Peace Message, I referred to "algor-ethics" in speaking of the absolute need for an ethical development of algorithms where values guide the development of new technologies.

In my speech at the G7, I highlighted the critical aspects of Artificial Intelligence, emphasizing that it is, and must remain, a tool in human hands. Like other innovative tools through the ages, it demonstrates humanity's ability to transcend itself, its drive to ever greater achievements, and thus its potential for bringing about great transformations, both positive and negative. In the latter sense, AI could well reinforce the technocratic paradigm and the culture of waste, aggravate disparities between advanced and developing nations, and delegate to a machine essential decisions with regard to human life. For this reason, I posited the absolute need for an ethical development and use of AI, and invited policymakers to adopt concrete actions to direct ongoing technological development towards universal fraternity and peace.

Your Conference, then, is helping to enhance our ability to appreciate the positive aspects of AI and to understand, mitigate, and contain its risks, working in dialogue with the scientific community to identify together the limits to be placed on innovation lest AI develop to the detriment of humanity.

Stephen Hawking, the well-known cosmologist, physicist and mathematician, observed that: "The development of full artificial intelligence could spell the end of the human race. It would take off on its own, and re-design itself at an ever-increasing rate. Humans, who are limited by slow biological evolution, couldn't compete and would be superseded" (BBC Interview, 2 December 2014). Is this what we want?

The fundamental question you are asking is this: *what is AI meant to do?* Is it meant to meet the needs of humanity, and to enhance the well-being and integral development of individuals, or is it meant to enrich and increase the power already concentrated in the hands of a few technological giants, despite its threats to humanity? Again, this is the fundamental question.

The answer to this question depends on any number of factors, and a variety of aspects that call for deeper investigation. I would like to mention a few of these, as a stimulus for your continuing research.

* There is a need to explore the delicate and strategic issue of responsibility for the decisions made with the use of AI; this would require the contribution of various branches of philosophy and law, as well as other, more specific disciplines.

* Appropriate incentives and means of effective regulation must be identified, in order on the one hand to stimulate ethical innovation useful for the progress of humanity, and on the other to prohibit or limit undesirable effects.

* The whole sector of education, training, and communication needs to initiate a coordinated process to expand knowledge and awareness about the correct use of AI and to teach future generations, from childhood on, how to evaluate these tools.

* The impact of AI on the job market should also be carefully assessed. I encourage the members of the *Centesimus Annus* Foundation, and all those taking part in its initiatives, to work actively, within their respective fields, to promote processes of professional retraining and to formulate measures that can facilitate

the relocation of individuals displaced by AI to other roles.

* The positive and negative effects of AI in the areas of security and privacy likewise call for careful study.

* We need to take into consideration and research more fully the impact of AI on people's relational and cognitive abilities and behaviours. We must not allow these capacities to be diminished or conditioned by a technological instrument controlled by those who own it or operate it.

* Lastly, recognizing that this list is far from exhaustive, we should consider the enormous consumption of energy required to develop AI, especially as humanity presently faces a challenging energy transition.

Dear friends, the future of the economy, civilization, and humanity itself is being shaped by technological innovation. We must not pass up the chance to think and act in a new way, using our minds, our hearts and our hands, and thus to steer innovation towards a model that gives priority to human dignity. Unfortunately, this is not discussed. Innovation ought to promote development, well-being, and peaceful coexistence, while protecting the most disadvantaged. This means creating a regulatory, economic, and financial environment capable of limiting the monopolizing power of a few and ensuring that innovation benefits the whole of humanity.

For this reason, I express my hope that the *Centesimus Annus* Foundation will continue its efforts to address this issue. I congratulate you on your launch of a second joint research project involving your Foundation and the Strategic Alliance of Catholic Research Universities (SACRU), on the topic: "Artificial Intelligence and Care for Our Common Home: A Focus on Business, Finance, and Communication," coordinated by Professor Tarantola. Please keep me informed about this!

I would like to conclude with a challenge: are we certain that we should continue to call "intelligent" something that in fact is not? This is meant to be a challenge. Let us reflect and ask ourselves if the improper use of this word is actually important, properly "human", or are we already surrendering to technocratic power.

I offer all of you my blessing and I wish you every success in your work. Continue to work courageously, and take risks! I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you!
