



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE FORUM OF CATHOLIC-INSPIRED
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

*Consistory Hall
Saturday, 7 December 2019*

[Multimedia]

*Dear Representatives of the Holy See to International Organizations,
Dear Friends, Leaders of Catholic-inspired Non-Governmental Organizations,*

I am pleased to welcome all of you to the See of Peter as a symbol of your communion with the universal Church. You have come from various countries of the world in order to share experiences and reflections on the theme of inclusion. I thank you for this initiative, by which you wish to offer a concrete testimony to help the most vulnerable be accepted and included, and thus to make our world a “common home”. You accomplish all this with experiences both on the ground and in the international political context.

Many of you are concerned to be present in the places where discussions are taking place about human rights, people’s living conditions, habitat, education and development, and other social problems. In this way, you demonstrate what the Second Vatican Council referred to as “the presence of the Church in the world, and her life and activity there” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 40). For the Church, those places are a “frontier” where she can play a significant role. As the Council stated, in speaking of the cooperation of Christians in international institutions: “Different Catholic international bodies can assist the community of nations on the way to peace, sisterhood and brotherhood; these bodies should be strengthened by increasing the number of their trained members, by increasing the subsidies they need so badly, and by suitable coordination of their forces. Nowadays, efficiency of action and the need for dialogue call for concerted effort” (*ibid.*, 90). This statement of the Council remains timely, and I would like to address three aspects of it: 1) the formation of members, 2) having the necessary means, and 3) coordinating initiatives

through “teamwork”.

First, *formation*. The complexity of our world and the anthropological crisis in which we find ourselves today call for a consistent witness of life, for the sake of stimulating dialogue and a positive reflection on human dignity. This witness calls for two things. On the one hand, great faith and the confidence that comes from knowing that we are instruments of God’s activity in the world; in this sense, efficiency is not the most important thing. On the other, the need for suitable professional preparation in scientific and human affairs so as to address these from the Christian perspective. In this regard, the social doctrine of the Church offers the framework of ecclesial principles that can help provide a better service to humanity. I encourage you to be familiar with that doctrine, to be well-trained in it, so as then to be able to “translate” it in your projects. The need to provide adequate training and education as a means of confronting the complex issues of contemporary social and political life represents a priority commitment for the Church today. We cannot “rest on our laurels”. That is why I have wished to launch a worldwide appeal to reconstruct a global Compact on education, a step forward, which can train for peace and justice, the acceptance of peoples and universal solidarity, while also taking into account the care of our “common home” along the lines of *Laudato Si’*. I encourage you, then, to keep growing in professionalism and in your ecclesial identity.

Second, possessing *the necessary means* to achieve your stated goals. Let us remember the parable of the talents. Yes, those means are necessary and important, but it can happen that sometimes they prove insufficient to reach the goals. We should not become discouraged, but keep in mind that the Church has always accomplished great works with limited means. Certainly, those means need to be found and our talents used in the best way possible, but in a way that demonstrates that all power comes to us from God and is not our own. That is where the Church’s wealth comes from; indeed, “God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work” (2 Cor 9:8). Sometimes it is counterproductive to have too many material resources for carrying out a work because it anesthetizes creativity. And this, from the administration of a housewife to large industries or large charitable organizations. Having to work out how to feed six thousand with only four thousand portions, for example, increases creativity. Moreover, there is a disease that concerns material resources in institutions: sometimes, when they are plentiful, such resources do not arrive where they are needed. Because, since we have resources, we pay a sub-secretariat here and an under-sub-secretariat there... and then the administrative organization chart grows to the point that forty, fifty, sixty percent of the contributions received remains in the organizational apparatus and does not reach where it should arrive. I am not inventing this, it happens today in many Church institutions that you know well.

Finally, *coordinating initiatives through teamwork*. The experience of faith, of knowing that we are vessels of the Lord’s grace, tells us that this is possible. Cooperating in shared projects makes the value of our works even more evident, since it brings out something connatural to the Church: her

communion, her journeying together (*syn-odos*) in the same mission in service of the common good, through “co-responsibility” and the contribution of everyone. Your Forum wishes to be an example in this regard. As a result, the projects that you carry out in different places, by joining forces with other Catholic organizations and in communion with your Pastors and the Representatives the Holy See to International Organizations, will have the expanding effect of the leaven of the Gospel and the light and power of the earliest Christians. Today’s world is calling for new boldness and new imagination in opening new paths of dialogue and cooperation, in order to promote a “culture of encounter”, where, in accordance with the creative plan of God, the dignity of every human person is foremost.

Dear friends, the Church and the Pope need your work, your commitment and your witness at the frontiers of the international community. The word “frontier” for you is full of meaning. Move forward with courage and ever-renewed hope. Many thanks.