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In the name of God, The Clement, The Merciful

Dear guests,

May the peace of God, His Mercy and His Blessings be with you!

Some cities and some peoples are recognizable by important monuments that have become landmarks. The city of Rome is known for St. Peter's dome, here in the Vatican. London has its famous Big Ben and Paris the Eiffel Tower rising up in the sky. New York is known for the Statue of Liberty, Cairo for the Pyramids, the minarets of Al-Azhar and the bell towers of its churches.

Then, two "monuments" of Christianity and Islam have recently arisen, and have joined the ranks of these symbols, providing a new pillar of truth, good, freedom and fraternity. At the mention of "Human Fraternity", free minds and conscious hearts turn to Pope Francis and the Grand Imam Ahmad Al Tayyeb, Sheikh of Al Azhar: these two figures have become, together, a new emblem and a new landmark, not for a particular country, or a particular people. They have become the powerful symbol of a noble idea, the idea of "Human Fraternity", and God, bestowing His mercy on his people, has placed these two illustrious symbols at the service of these supreme human concepts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If growth and renewal follow the rules of life as it is experienced by living beings, then life cannot be complete without thought and creativity. What we are witnessing in the Vatican, starting with its highest authority, proves that, all things considered, we are moving in the right direction and that the creative and foundational thought of a new vision is heading towards higher horizons in time and space.

After signing the "Document on Human Fraternity", Pope Francis continued his journey, and thus his public or private reflections on the reality of nations came to life. The nations' demand for happiness requires a commitment that is difficult to define because of the various sectors involved, the interests and policies at stake and the contrasts between states and peoples, all of which are problems that put consciences and wills to the test. Drawing his inspiration from this state of affairs and thanks

to his clear intuition, the Pope has written clear and courageous words that fear only God, to describe the tragedies of weak, tired and desperate people, and to prescribe the cure for this evil that is difficult to heal, and has hit our modern civilisation to death. This is the origin of the Encyclical that we are celebrating today.

Although I had accompanied the Pope and the Imam in the various stages of the journey of Human Fraternity over the last decade, when I read this Encyclical on Fraternity and Social Friendship, I identified a refined taste, an incisive sensibility and an ability to express the themes of human fraternity to the whole world. It is an appeal to concord to a world in discord, as well as a clear message in favour of both individual and collective harmony with the laws of the universe, the world and life. This notion relies on a clear reasoning that is rooted in the truth and is practicable in real life and in the real world.

Distinguished guests,

As a young Muslim scholar of Shari'a (law), Islam and its sciences, I find myself - with much love and enthusiasm - in agreement with the Pope, and I share every word he has written in the Encyclical. I follow, with satisfaction and hope, all his proposals put forward in a spirit of concern for the rebirth of human fraternity.

In this Encyclical, the Pope warns, in no uncertain terms, against ideologies imbued with selfishness and the loss of social sense, which operate behind the mask of presumed national interests[1], at the same time, he admonishes against the dangers of globalisation and its consequences, which may have brought us closer together, but will certainly not make us brothers and sisters[2].

I was extremely happy as I read the Pope's harsh criticism of what we can define "the end of historical consciousness", with the serious infiltration of this theory in our cultures. This theory relies on the disintegration of the cultural heritage, and the creation of generations that despise their heritage and history with all its cultural richness.[3]

How great is the Pope when he reprimands against this new form of colonialism that can manipulate extremely important and sensitive concepts, such as democracy, freedom, justice and unity, using them as a means of control, domination and arrogance, emptying them of their meaning, sometimes even to justify its actions[4].

How creative he is on human rights, when he highlights the new forms of injustice and exploitation of man and the denial of his dignity[5], injustice against women[6], and the slavery-like conditions that so many people

suffer today. The Pope rightly considers that persecution for religious or ethnic reasons, and other violations of human dignity are aspects of a "third world war fought piecemeal".[7]

How great is the Pope when he addresses the root causes of migration and displacement, reiterating that human dignity was lost at the border between Europe and the Third World.[8]

In addition, the Pope raised present-day issues, such as the pandemic and other tragedies in history[9], asking that we rethink our lifestyles and the organisation of our societies.

Unlike what normally happens when I prepare my speeches, I found myself in agreement with the Pope's words. His frankness and clarity in the passages I mentioned enthralled me. This is only a small part of this free thought, which assumes the cause of man and his problems as its own, both in the East as in the West. I am convinced that this Encyclical, together with the Document on Human Fraternity, will restart the train of history that had stopped at the station of this world order, and was rooted in unreasonableness, injustice, pride and colonial violence. I hope that this Encyclical, together with the Document on Human Fraternity, shall be a strong deterrent against falsehood in all its forms and expressions, and that it can be the basis, or the most important factor for the birth of a new world order, that relies on the sacredness of dignity and human rights - as the Pope said - not on contempt, slavery and the exploitation of man. At the same time, I hope that this Encyclical will reach the hands of politicians and decision-makers alike, and enlighten them to lead the world out of the unreasonable state that it is living today.

Can we contextualise these beautiful ideas and noble concepts in today's real world? I think this is possible. Just people help each other to achieve good and support it.

My colleagues from the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity and I want to offer our modest contribution by convening a Forum for 100 young people from different parts of the world. We shall organize study days on this Encyclical in Rome and Abu Dhabi, where the Document on Human Fraternity was announced, but also in Egypt, the country of Al Azhar. Participants shall dedicate themselves to reflect and study the document in an open and in-depth dialogue. In this way, the Encyclical will reach young people of different religions and ethnicities, with the hope that it may be a step in the right direction, towards worldwide human fraternity.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

In this decisive phase of human history, we find ourselves at a crossroads between universal fraternity in which humanity rejoices and acute misery

that will increase people's suffering and deprivation. The road of fraternity is both old and new. It is renewed and travelled in the shadow of spiritual and moral values, and is governed by the equilibrium and harmony between science and faith, between this world and life to come. Let us therefore support each other on the path of fraternity, mutual knowledge and collaboration in order to reach the destination where our goals and objectives meet, the good of all humanity.

We are in favour of uniting religious energies to tackle discrimination, racism, and hatred. At the same time, we strive for the consolidation of our own doctrine, deepening our own specific aspects and avoiding disunity or disintegration. This is the goal of every person faithful to his or her religion.

Universal fraternity remains - yesterday, today and tomorrow - an absolute necessity for the whole world, and is indispensable for salvation. Because it will give life to a balanced and happy civilization, as it centres on man regardless of skin colour, sex, language and religion.

Finally, I address these words to His Holiness Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar:

Your efforts and endeavours in favour of human coexistence and world fraternity, that culminated in the Document on Human Fraternity you proclaimed last year in Abu Dhabi - in an unprecedented event in modern history - represent a turning point in the Arab and Muslim world, and a ray of light for the whole world. Every day we see young people meeting around the principles of fraternity and coexistence, and we see an unprecedented openness in the relationships among the faithful of all religions. We also see many people, mentally closed to the members of other religions, beginning to revise their way of thinking.

My colleagues of the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity and I promise that we shall continue to work faithfully to make this document a reality for all. We shall do so through the concrete and ambitious initiatives of the Committee, that have always received the loyal and sincere support of His Highness Sheikh Mohammad Ben Zayed Al Nahyan, a true Arab leader, who has remained faithful to the commitment that he made to you to implement the principles of the Document on Human Fraternity, so that they may bear the desired fruit to every person on earth, independently from their religion, gender or race.

Thank you Pope Francis for this powerful and courageous Encyclical.

[1] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 11.

[2] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 12.

[3] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 13.

- [4] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 14.
- [5] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 22.
- [6] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 23.
- [7] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 25.
- [8] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", number 41.
- [9] Encyclical, Pope Francis, "Fratelli tutti", from number 32 to number 36.
- [01156-EN.01] [Original text: Arab - working translation]