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To participants in the Harvard World MUN: behind every problem there is a human face

Vatican City, 17 March 2016 – Three thousand university students from 115 countries, present in Rome for the 2016 Harvard World Model United Nations (World MUN), were received in audience by Pope Francis in the Paul VI Hall this morning. The World MUN, held in Rome from 14 to 18 March, is a "simulation" in which students from various schools and universities assume the role of diplomats from the United Nations member states, learning about issues of culture, economy, internal policy and international relations so as to be able to engage in debate as in the organs and committees of the United Nations.

World MUN was founded 25 years ago with the mission of forming the new generation of world leaders and to teach university students to understand the world in which they live and to use the instruments of cooperation and diplomacy to improve it. The theme this year is "Future 25", and the aim is to promote reflection on the past to plan the institutions of the future. Previous editions have been held in, among other places, Puebla (Mexico), Geneva (Switzerland), Beijing (China), Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Sharm el-Sheikh (Egypt), Taipei (Taiwan), Singapore and Vancouver (Canada).

"As university students, you are given in a particular way to the pursuit of truth and understanding, of growing in wisdom not only for your own benefit, but for the good of your local communities and broader society. I hope that this experience will lead you to appreciate the need for, and the value of, structures of cooperation and solidarity which have been forged by the international community over many years. These structures are especially effective when they are directed to the service of the most vulnerable and marginalised in our world. I pray that the United Nations, and each individual Member State, may always be ordered to such service and care.

Francis went on to observe that the greatest benefit of the meeting in Rome was not necessarily learning about diplomacy, institutional systems or organisations, while significant and worthy of study, but rather the "encounter with people from around the world, who represent not only our many contemporary challenges, but above all the rich diversity of talents and potential of the human family".

"The issues and challenges you discuss are not faceless. For each of you can articulate the hopes and dreams, the challenges and sufferings, which mark the people of your country. In these days, you will learn much from one another, and will remind each other that, behind every difficulty our world is facing, there are men and women, young and old, people just like you. There are families and individuals whose lives are daily shaped by

struggles, who are trying to care for their children and provide not only for their future but also the basic necessities for today. So too, many of those affected by our world's greatest problems of violence and intolerance have become refugees, tragically forced from their homes, and denied their land and their freedom".

"These are the people who need your help, who are crying out for you to hear them, and who are supremely worthy of our every effort on behalf of justice, peace and solidarity", emphasised Francis, remarking that St. Paul tells us that we are to rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. "In the end, our strength as a community, on every level of life and social organisation, lies not so much in our learning and personal ability, but in the compassion we show for one another, in the care that we exercise especially for those who cannot care for themselves".

"I also hope that your experience has led you to see the commitment of the Catholic Church to serving the needs of the poor and refugees, to strengthening the family and communities, and to protecting the inalienable dignity and rights of each member of our human family. We Christians believe that Jesus calls us to be servants of our brothers and sisters, who care for others regardless of their background or circumstances. This is not only a mark of Christians, however, but is a universal call, rooted in our common humanity, something we have as people, that we have inside ourselves as human beings", concluded the Pope, assuring the participants in World MUN and their families of his prayers. "May Almighty God bless you with the happiness he has promised to those who hunger and thirst for justice and work for peace".
