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## **The Pope renews his appeal to observe the ceasefire in Syria and demands severe penalties for those who abuse minors**

Vatican City, 1 May 2016 – After today's Regina Coeli, the Pope first greeted the brothers of the Oriental Churches who today celebrate Easter, asking that the risen Lord give to all the gifts of peace and light.

"I receive with profound sorrow the dramatic news from Syria regarding the spiral of violence that continues to aggravate the country's already desperate humanitarian situation, especially in the city of Aleppo, and to claim innocent lives, including children, the sick and those who with great sacrifices are committed to assisting their neighbours. I urge all parties to the conflict to respect the ceasefire and to strengthen the ongoing dialogue, the only path that leads to peace."

He went on to mention that the International Conference on "Sustainable Development and the most vulnerable forms of work". "I hope that the event will raise awareness among authorities, political and economic institutions and in civil society, so that a model of development may be promoted taking into account human dignity, with full respect for legislation regarding work and the environment".

Finally, he addressed the members of the "Meter" association present in the Square, who for some years now have been engaged in the fight against all forms of abuse of minors. "It is a tragedy", Francis observed. "The abuse of minors must not be tolerated. We must defend them and impose severe penalties on those who abuse them. Thank you for your efforts, and continue your work with courage."