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Video Message of the Holy Father to the participants in the Global Compact on Education

This afternoon, at the Pontifical Lateran University, during an event, streamed live, promoted by the Congregation for Catholic Education, a video message of the Holy Father to the participants in the *Global Compact on Education* was broadcast.

The following is the Holy Father's video message:

Video Message of the Holy Father

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

When I invited you to begin this process of preparation, consultation and planning for a global pact on education, we could never have imagined the situation that has developed in the meantime. The Covid crisis has accelerated and magnified many of the issues and needs that we had identified, and has uncovered numerous others as well. Concerns about health care are now accompanied by economic and social concerns. Educational systems worldwide have felt the effects of the pandemic at every level.

Attempts have been made everywhere to offer a rapid response through online educational platforms. These have brought to light a marked disparity in educational and technological opportunities, but they have also made us realize that, due to the lockdown and many other already existing needs, large numbers of children and adolescents have fallen behind in the natural process of schooling. Recent statistics from international agencies have led some to speak, perhaps somewhat hastily, of an "educational catastrophe", inasmuch as some ten million children were forced to leave school as a result of the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus. This has only increased an already alarming gap (with over 250 million school age children excluded from all educational activities).

Faced with this dramatic situation, we know that necessary health care measures will prove inadequate unless accompanied by a new cultural model. We have become more conscious of the need to change our model of

development. In order to ensure that the dignity of the human person is respected and protected, development ought to start from the opportunity that global interdependence offers to communities and peoples to care for our common home and to foster peace. We are experiencing a comprehensive crisis that cannot be reduced or limited to any single sector. It affects everything. The pandemic has led us to realize that what is really in crisis is our way of understanding reality and of relating to one another.

Here it is evident that neither simplistic solutions nor wishful thinking will do. Education, as we know, is meant to be transformative. To educate is to take a risk and to hold out to the present a hope that can shatter the determinism and fatalism that the selfishness of the strong, the conformism of the weak and the ideology of the utopians would convince us is the only way forward.¹

To educate is always an act of hope, one that calls for cooperation in turning a barren and paralyzing indifference into another way of thinking that recognizes our interdependence. If our educational systems are presently marked by a mindset of replacement and repetition, and are incapable of opening up new horizons in which hospitality, intergenerational solidarity and the value of transcendence can give birth to a new culture, would this not signify that we are failing to take advantage of the opportunity offered by this historic moment?

We also know that the journey of life calls for hope grounded in solidarity. All change requires a process of education in order to create new paradigms capable of responding to the challenges and problems of the contemporary world, of understanding and finding solutions to the needs of every generation, and in this way contributing to the flourishing of humanity now and in the future.

We consider education to be one of the most effective ways of making our world and history more human. Education is above all a matter of love and responsibility handed down from one generation to another.

As such, education is a natural antidote to the individualistic culture that at times degenerates into a true cult of the self and the primacy of indifference. Our future cannot be one of division, impoverishment of thought, imagination, attentiveness, dialogue and mutual understanding. That cannot be our future.

Today, there is need for a renewed commitment to an education that engages society at every level. Let us heed the plea of the young, which opens our eyes to both the urgent need and the exciting opportunity of a renewed kind of education that is not tempted to look the other way and thus favour grave social injustices, violations of rights, terrible forms of poverty and the waste of human lives.

What is called for is an integral process that responds to those situations of loneliness and uncertainty about the future that affect young people and generate depression, addiction, aggressiveness, verbal hatred and bullying. This entails a shared journey that is not indifferent to the scourge of violence, the abuse of minors, the phenomenon of child marriage and child soldiers, the tragedy of children sold into slavery. To say nothing of the "sufferings" endured by our planet as a result of a senseless and heartless exploitation that has led to a grave environmental and climatic crisis.

At certain moments in history, it is necessary to make radical decisions that can shape not only our way of life but above all our stance in the face of possible future scenarios. Amid the present health crisis – and the poverty and confusion it has caused – we believe that it is time to subscribe to a global pact on education for and with future generations. This calls for a commitment on the part of families, communities, schools, universities, institutions, religions, governments and the entire human family to the training of mature men and women.

Today, we are called to have the necessary *parrhesía* to leave behind superficial approaches to education and the many short-cuts associated with utility, (standardized) test results, functionality and bureaucracy, which confuse education with instruction and end up atomizing our cultures. Instead, we should aim to impart an integral, participatory and polyhedral culture. We need the courage to generate processes that consciously work to overcome the existing fragmentation and the conflicts that we all bring with us. We need the courage to renew the fabric of relationships for the sake of a humanity capable of speaking the language of fraternity. The value of our educational practices will be measured not simply by the results of standardized tests, but by the ability to

affect the heart of society and to help give birth to a new culture. A different world is possible and we are called to learn how to build it. This will involve every aspect of our humanity, both as individuals and in our communities.

Let us appeal in particular to men and women of culture, science and sport, artists and media professionals in every part of the world to join in supporting this compact and promoting by their own testimony and efforts the values of care for others, peace, justice, goodness, beauty, acceptance and fraternity. "We should not expect everything from those who govern us, for that would be childish. We have the space we need for co-responsibility in creating and putting into place new processes and changes. Let us take an active part in renewing and supporting our troubled societies. Today we have a great opportunity to express our innate sense of fraternity, to be Good Samaritans who bear the pain of other people's troubles rather than fomenting greater hatred and resentment" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 77). This calls for a pluralistic and multifaceted process in which all of us can work to provide meaningful responses, in which diversity and methods are harmonized in the pursuit of the common good. The ability to create harmony: that is what is needed today.

For these reasons, we commit ourselves personally and in common:

- First, to make human persons in their value and dignity the centre of every educational programme, both formal and informal, in order to foster their distinctiveness, beauty and uniqueness, and their capacity for relationship with others and with the world around them, while at the same time teaching them to reject lifestyles that encourage the spread of the throwaway culture.

- Second, to listen to the voices of children and young people to whom we pass on values and knowledge, in order to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person.

- Third, to encourage the full participation of girls and young women in education.

- Fourth, to see in the family the first and essential place of education.

- Fifth, to educate and be educated on the need for acceptance and in particular openness to the most vulnerable and marginalized.

- Sixth, to be committed to finding new ways of understanding the economy, politics, growth and progress that can truly stand at the service of the human person and the entire human family, within the context of an integral ecology.

- Seventh, to safeguard and cultivate our common home, protecting it from the exploitation of its resources, and to adopt a more sober lifestyle marked by the use of renewable energy sources and respect for the natural and human environment, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity, solidarity and a circular economy.

Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we want to commit ourselves courageously to developing an educational plan within our respective countries, investing our best energies and introducing creative and transformative processes in cooperation with civil society. In this, our point of reference should be the social doctrine that, inspired by the revealed word of God and Christian humanism, provides a solid basis and a vital resource for discerning the paths to follow in the present emergency.

The goal of this educational investment, grounded in a network of humane and open relationships, is to ensure that everyone has access to a quality education consonant with the dignity of the human person and our common vocation to fraternity. It is time to look to the future with courage and hope. May we be sustained by the conviction that education bears within itself a seed of hope: the hope of peace and justice; the hope of beauty and goodness; the hope of social harmony.

Let us not forget, brothers and sisters, that great changes are not produced from behind desks or in offices. No.

There is an “architecture” of peace to which various institutions and individuals in society all contribute, each according to its own area of expertise, without excluding anyone (cf. *Fratelli Tutti*, 231). In this way, we must move forward, all of us together, each as we are, but always looking ahead to the building of a civilization of harmony and unity, in which there will be no room for the terrible pandemic of the throw-away culture. Thank you.

1 Cf. M. DE CERTEAU, *Lo straniero o l'unione nella differenza*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2010, 30. Original: *L'étranger ou l'union dans la différence*, Paris, 2017.
