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Audience with participants in the Pre-COP 26 Parliamentary Meeting

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the Pre-COP 26 Parliamentary Meeting, promoted in Italy in collaboration with the United Kingdom, taking place in Rome, at Palazzo Montecitorio, from 8 to 9 October 2021.

The following is the Pope's address to those present:

Address of the Holy Father

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I offer you a cordial welcome and I thank Mrs Casellati and Mr Fico for their kind words.

Several days ago, on 4 October, I joined various religious leaders and scientists in signing a Joint Appeal in view of COP26. The inspiration for that Meeting, which was preceded by months of intense dialogue, was, in the words of the Appeal, an “*awareness of the unprecedented challenges that threaten us and life on our beautiful common home... and the necessity of an even deeper solidarity in the face of the global pandemic and of the growing concern*” in that regard (*Faith and Science: Towards COP26*, Joint Appeal, 4 October 2021).

At our Meeting, we affirmed, in a spirit of fraternity, an impressive convergence of all our different voices on two points. First, our sorrow at the grave harm inflicted on the human family and its common home; and second, the urgent need for a change of direction, in order to move decisively and firmly away from the *throwaway* culture, prevalent in our society, towards a culture of *care*.

That challenge is complex and demanding, but humanity has the means to effect this change, which calls for genuine conversion and a steadfast determination to meet it. This is especially incumbent upon those called to positions of great responsibility in the various sectors of society.

The Joint Appeal, which I am symbolically presenting to you through the Presidents of the two Houses of the Italian Parliament, includes a number of commitments that we intend to make in the realm of action and example, as well as in education. Indeed, we find ourselves facing a significant *educational challenge*, since “all change requires an educational process aimed at developing a new universal solidarity and a more welcoming society” (*Message for the Launch of the Global Compact on Education*, 12 September 2019). The challenge to promote an education for an integral ecology is one to which we, the representatives of the religions, are firmly committed.

At the same time, we appeal to governments to adopt without delay a course of action that would limit the average global temperature rise and to take courageous steps, including the strengthening of international cooperation. Specifically, we appeal to them to promote a transition towards clean energy; to adopt sustainable land use practices, preventing deforestation and restoring forests, conserving biodiversity, favouring food systems that are environmentally friendly and respectful of local cultures, working to end hunger and malnutrition, and to promote sustainable lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production.

This means a transition towards a more integral and inclusive model of development, one grounded in solidarity and responsibility, whose effects on the world of work will also have to be taken into careful consideration.

To meet this challenge, everyone has a role to play. That of political and government leaders is especially important, and indeed crucial. This demanding change of direction will require great wisdom, foresight and concern for the common good: in a word, the fundamental virtues of good politics. As political leaders and legislators, you are responsible for influencing people’s actions by those means provided by the law, “which lays down rules for admissible conduct in the light of the common good” (*Laudato Si’*, 177), and with respect for such other fundamental principles as the dignity of the human person, solidarity and subsidiarity (cf. *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 160ff.). Care for our common home naturally falls within the scope of these principles. To be sure, it is not just a matter of discouraging and penalizing improper practices, but also, and above all, of concretely encouraging new paths to pursue, paths better suited to the objectives we seek to achieve. These are essential elements to be considered as we strive to meet the goals set out in the Paris Agreement and to contribute to the positive outcome of COP26.

It is my hope that your work and commitment in the process of preparing for COP26 and beyond will be illuminated by the two important principles of *responsibility* and *solidarity*. We owe this to the young, to future generations, who deserve our best efforts to ensure that they can live in hope. For this to happen, there is an urgent need for wise and just laws that transcend the narrow confines of a certain politics and quickly reach a fitting consensus, through the use of trustworthy and transparent means.

Once again I thank you for your visit. May God bless you, your families and your work.
