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Audience with the participants in the International Conference “Women Building a Culture of Encounter Interreligiously”

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the participants in the international conference “Women Building a Culture of Encounter Interreligiously”, organized by the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue in collaboration with the World Union of Female Catholic Organizations, taking place from 25 to 27 January 2023 in Rome, at the Pontifical Urban University.

The following is the greeting addressed by the Pope to those present at the meeting:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Your Eminence,
Members and Consultors of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue,
Madam President of the World Union of Catholic Women’s Organizations,
Dear Friends, good morning!

I offer a warm welcome to all of you, especially to the speakers at your Conference “Women Building a Culture of Encounter Interreligiously”. I am grateful for our meeting here today.

It is not a common occurrence for followers of twelve religions from around the globe to come together and discuss important questions concerning encounter and dialogue for promoting peace and understanding in our wounded world. The fact that your Conference is devoted to listening to the experiences and perspectives of women is all the more valuable, since “our quest for peace must increasingly involve...women. Because women bestow care and life upon the world: they are themselves a path towards peace” (*Final Declaration*, VII Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, Astana, 15 September 2022).

The Catholic Church is committed to interreligious dialogue and to furthering understanding and cooperation among followers of different religious traditions. Each one of your traditions, and each one of you, has wisdom to

offer the world, in order to infuse it with a spirit of warmth, healing, and fraternity.

A large part of your Conference is devoted to re-discovering the feminine aspects of your respective religious traditions and to showing how they contribute to a culture of encounter. Indeed, "The ability to sit down and listen to others, typical of interpersonal encounters, is paradigmatic of the welcoming attitude shown by those who transcend narcissism and accept others, caring for them and welcoming them into their lives" (*Fratelli Tutti*, 48). The activity of encounter and the openness it requires is becoming rare and its practice is one of the greatest gifts you can offer to your families, to your communities and to society as a whole.

I encourage you to continue this important work together, sharing with one another the insights and practices that give you strength and creativity as you strive in your particular contexts to offer healing to many people who are seeking not only material relief from suffering, but above all, a sense of meaning and purpose for their lives. In this regard, I am grateful to you for your commitment and effort to foster the dignity of women and girls in particular.

I thank you for your presence and I offer you my cordial good wishes for your important work in these days. My God bless you, your work and your loved ones.
