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Dichiarazione Finale del Pontificio Consiglio per il Dialogo Interreligioso al termine del VI Convegno Buddista-Cristiano (Taiwan, 13-16 novembre 2017)

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue of the Holy See, in cooperation with the Chinese Regional Bishops Conference (CRBC), and Ling Jiou Mountain Buddhist Society, organized the Sixth Buddhist-Christian Colloquium from 13-15 November 2017 at Ling Jiou Buddhist Monastery, and, on the following day, the Closing Ceremony at the Museum of World Religions, Taipei. The general theme was Buddhists and Christians Walking Together on the Path of Nonviolence. The Tzu Chi Foundation, Fo Guang Shan and the Buddhist Association of New Taipei City were also actively involved in organizing this Colloquium.

More than eighty men and women, Buddhist and Christian, representing eighteen countries, attended the Colloquium, among them both academics and practitioners of inter-religious engagement. Participants also included members from the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC), the World Council of Churches (WCC), and Monastic Interreligious Dialogue.

The participants noted that in the course of the years, Christian-Buddhist dialogue has made a valuable contribution to improving mutual understanding and mutual knowledge, as well as strengthening relationships and cooperation aimed at promoting a culture of peace and nonviolence on the basis of shared values. The participants also acknowledged that the 21st century has been marked by conflicts that also involve ethnic, cultural, and religious affiliations and identifications. In many regions of the world, cultural diversity has become a social and political issue. Many people have been deprived of equal protection and rights, and are treated as second-class citizens within their own countries.

While acknowledging and appreciating various initiatives at the local, national, regional, and international levels aimed at promoting a culture of encounter and respect, the participants emphasized that much remains to be done to build together a culture of peace with justice for all human beings and to preserve and enhance the welfare of the environment, our common home. The participants stressed that they met at a critical time, when violence has already wreaked havoc in many of their countries, leaving people in desperate need of healing, justice, forgiveness, and reconciliation. They also observed that violence and conflicts today cross borders, and thus local problems become national, regional, and at times, even global ones.

The participants were unanimously agreed that there is no time to lose, since the situation is so serious. Consequently, they noted that on the basis of their respective religious convictions they need to bring new hope to a shattered world by speaking of the love of Jesus and the compassion of the Buddha. This task includes speaking out in defense of the powerless and voiceless, standing up for justice, mending broken hearts and polarized societies, distancing themselves from sectarianism, and halting the building of walls that separate religions and cultures. At this crucial moment, encouraged by the positive outcome of the Colloquium, the participants, as followers of Buddha and believers in Jesus, were agreed on:

1. Recognizing that the Sixth Buddhist-Christian Colloquium has been an important milestone in fostering a culture of peace and nonviolence in a culture of indifference.
2. Stressing the importance of hearing the cry of the victims of violence in its multiple forms self-directed, interpersonal, and collective and also decrying and curbing the threats of unbridled nationalism, sexism, racism, casteism, ethnicism, and religious and secular fundamentalism.
3. Eradicating poverty, injustice, inequality, exploitation, and discrimination, which are often the underlying causes of violence and conflicts.
4. Recognizing the positive influence of the media in encouraging nonviolent actions for global peace and warning the public of the negative impact of fake news, which can provoke estrangement, division, prejudice and violence between people of different cultures and religions.
5. Encouraging concrete actions at the national, regional, and global levels aimed at restoring polarized societies through justice, reconciliation, and forgiveness, as well as advancing the equality and dignity of women in order to prevent violence and discrimination against them, especially the scourge of domestic violence.
6. Developing safe, stable, nurturing and caring relationships between children and their parents, relatives, teachers, elders, orphans and others, in order to form wholesome individuals and inclusive societies, and reaffirming the importance of education, especially by creating academic institutions focused on training new generations of young women and men to love peace in various settings.
7. Promoting hospitality by recognizing that we and the other share a common humanity, regardless of ethnic, religious, cultural, or socioeconomic differences, so as to avert and minimize verbal, physical, sexual, and psychological abuse.
8. Recognizing that the eco-crisis is an ego-crisis and promoting eco-spirituality for safeguarding the environment, our common home, and emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of all life forms as central to living communities.
9. Promoting prayer, silence, and meditation to cultivate inner freedom, purity of heart, compassion, forgiveness, healing and the gift of self as essential conditions for the inner peace of the individual as well as for social peace.
10. Acknowledging the important role that faith-based organizations, people of goodwill, civil society, governmental organizations, and centres of education can play in fostering interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

The participants express their gratitude to the Conference Committee for creating a pleasant atmosphere and for the warm hospitality that characterized this Colloquium. They also thank the Authorities of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and local Christian and Buddhist followers for their generous support in making the Sixth Buddhist-Christian dialogue a success.

