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Message of the Holy Father to the Executive President of the “World Economic Forum”

The following is the Message sent by the Holy Father Francis to Professor Klaus Schwab, executive president of the World Economic Forum, on the occasion of the annual meeting underway in Davos, Switzerland, from 15 to 19 January 2024:

Message of the Holy Father

To the Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum

This year’s annual meeting of the World Economic Forum takes place in a very troubling climate of international instability. Your Forum, which aims to guide and strengthen political will and mutual cooperation, provides an important opportunity for multi-stakeholder engagement to explore innovative and effective ways to build a better world. It is my hope that your discussions will take into account the urgent need to advance social cohesion, fraternity, and reconciliation among groups, communities, and states, in order to address the challenges before us.

Sadly, as we look around, we find an increasingly lacerated world, in which millions of persons – men, women, fathers, mothers, children – whose faces are for the most part unknown to us, continue to suffer, not least from the effects of prolonged conflicts and actual wars. These sufferings are exacerbated by the fact that “modern wars no longer take place only on clearly defined battlefields, nor do they involve soldiers alone. In a context where it appears that the distinction between military and civil targets is no longer respected, there is no conflict that does not end up in some way indiscriminately striking the civilian population” (*Address to Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 8 January 2024*).

The peace for which the peoples of our world yearn cannot be other than the fruit of justice (cf. *Isaiah 32:17*). Consequently, it calls for more than simply setting aside the instruments of war; it demands addressing the injustices that are the root causes of conflict. Among the most significant of these is hunger, which continues to plague entire regions of the world, even as others are marked by excessive food waste. The exploitation of

natural resources continues to enrich a few while leaving entire populations, who are the natural beneficiaries of these resources, in a state of destitution and poverty. Nor can we disregard the widespread exploitation of men, women and children forced to work for low wages and deprived of real prospects for personal development and professional growth. How is it possible that in today's world people are still dying of hunger, being exploited, condemned to illiteracy, lacking basic medical care, and left without shelter?

The process of globalization, which has by now clearly demonstrated the interdependence of the world's nations and peoples, thus has a fundamentally moral dimension, which must make itself felt in the economic, cultural, political and religious discussions that aim to shape the future of the international community. In a world increasingly threatened by violence, aggression and fragmentation, it is essential that states and businesses join in promoting far-sighted and ethically sound models of globalization, which by their very nature must entail subordinating the pursuit of power and individual gain, be it political or economic, to the common good of our human family, giving priority to the poor, the needy and those in the most vulnerable situations.

For its part, the world of business and finance now operates in ever broader economic contexts, where national states have a limited capacity to govern rapid changes in international economic and financial relations. This situation requires that businesses themselves be increasingly guided not simply by the pursuit of fair profit, but also by high ethical standards, especially with regard to the less developed countries, which should not be at the mercy of abusive or usurious financial systems. A farsighted approach to these issues will prove decisive in meeting the goal of an integral development of humanity in solidarity. Authentic development must be global, shared by all nations and in every part of the world, or it will regress even in areas marked hitherto by constant progress.

At the same time, there is an evident need for international political action that, through the adoption of coordinated measures, can effectively pursue the goals of global peace and authentic development. In particular, it is important that intergovernmental structures be able effectively to exercise their functions of control and guidance in the economic sector, since the achievement of the common good is an objective beyond the reach of individual states, even those that are dominant in terms of power, wealth and political strength. International organizations are also challenged to ensure the achievement of that equality which is the basis of the right of all to participate in the process of full development, with due respect for legitimate differences.

It is my hope, then, that the participants in this year's Forum will be mindful of the moral responsibility that each of us has in the fight against poverty, the attainment of an integral development for all our brothers and sisters, and the quest for a peaceful coexistence among peoples. This is the great challenge that the present time sets before us. And if, in the pursuit of these goals, "our own days seem to be showing signs of a certain regression", it remains true that "each new generation must take up the struggles and attainments of past generations, while setting its sights even higher... Goodness, together with love, justice and solidarity, are not achieved once and for all; they have to be realized each day" (Apostolic Exhortation *Laudate Deum*, 34).

With these sentiments, I offer my prayerful good wishes for the deliberations of the Forum, and upon all taking part I willingly invoke an abundance of divine blessings.

From the Vatican, 15 January 2024

FRANCIS
