The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF XXVII UNIAPAC WORLD CONGRESS

Paul VI Audience Hall

Friday, 21 October 2022

[Multimedia]

Dear leaders and participants in the 27th UNIAPAC World Congress!

First, I apologize for my lateness. Thank you for your patience in waiting for me. Today we had more meetings than were planned, and I am sorry about that.

I offer you a warm welcome as you meet for this important session to reflect on and strengthen your commitment to your noble vocation as business leaders (cf. *Laudato si'*, 129). May we never forget that all our abilities, including success in business, are gifts from God and "should always be clearly directed to the development of others and to eliminating poverty, especially through the creation of diversified work opportunities" (*Fratelli tutti*, 123). Change always requires courage. Yet true courage also includes acknowledging the presence of God's grace in our lives. In the words of the Psalmist: "Wait for the Lord, take courage; be stouthearted, wait for the Lord" [*Psalm* 27:14].

I pray that in these days together, but also when you return to your homes and to your places of business, you always be constantly aware of God's grace and wisdom at work in your lives, and allow him to guide and direct your interactions within the business world and with those whom you employ. "We are called to be creative in doing good … using the goods of this world – not only material goods, but all of the gifts we have received from the Lord – not to enrich ourselves, but to generate fraternal love and social fellowship"(*Angelus*, 18 September 2022). To generate social friendship.

The theme of your Congress also poses a significant challenge for yourselves and for many others

in the business world: that of *creating a new economy for the common good.* There can be no doubt that our world urgently needs “a different kind of economy: one that brings life not death, one that is inclusive and not exclusive, humane and not dehumanizing, one that cares for the environment and does not despoil it”. [1] As you continue to consider a new economy, and, more importantly, work to achieve it, never forget that economic activity “must be directed to all men and to all peoples. Everyone has the right to participate in economic life and the duty to contribute, each according to his or her own capacity, to the progress of his or her own country and to that of the entire human family… This is a duty in solidarity and justice, but it is also the best way to bring economic progress to all of humanity”. [2]

Any “new economy for the common good” will therefore have to be inclusive. Too often, the slogan “leave no one behind” is repeated without any intention of making the effort and sacrifice to make those words a reality. In his Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, St. Paul VI observed that development “cannot be restricted to economic growth alone. To be authentic, it must be well-rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man (No. 14). In your professional lives as business leaders and entrepreneurs, you are called to act as a leaven, ensuring that development reaches all people, but most importantly the most marginalized and those in greatest need, so that the economy will always contribute to an integral human development. In this regard, let us not overlook the important contribution made by the informal sector during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. During the lockdown, for most of society it was informal workers who assured the supply and delivery of goods needed for daily living and the care of the most vulnerable, and maintained basic economic activities despite the disruption experienced in many formal business activities.

In light of all this, “we are called upon to prioritize our response to workers who find themselves on the margins of the labour market… low-skilled workers, day labourers, those who work in the informal sector, migrant and refugee workers, those who perform what are commonly referred to as ‘3D occupations’: dangerous, dirty and degrading, and the list could go on”. [3]

Let us also set aside the idea that the inclusion of the poor and marginalized can be achieved solely by our efforts to provide financial and material assistance. As I wrote in *Laudato si'*, “helping the poor financially must always be a provisional solution in the face of pressing needs. The broader objective should always be to allow them a dignified life through work” (No. 128). Indeed, the door to the dignity of an individual is work. It is not enough to put bread on the table; it is more important to earn the bread we bring home.

Work must thus be understood and respected as a process that goes far beyond a commercial exchange between employer and employee. It is first and foremost “a part of the meaning of life on this earth, a path to growth, human development and personal fulfilment” (*ibid*.). Work “is an expression of our creation in the *image and likeness of God, the worker* (*Gen*. 2:3)… we are created with a vocation to work”, [4] in imitation of God, for he is the first “worker”.

Such work should be properly integrated in an economy of *care*. “Care can be understood as taking care of people and nature, offering products and services for the growth of the common good. An economy that cares for work, creating employment opportunities that do not exploit workers through degrading working conditions and grueling hours”. [5] Here we are not just referring to work associated with assistance. “Care goes further; it must be a dimension of all work. Work that does not show care, that destroys creation, that endangers the survival of future generations, is not respectful of the dignity of workers and cannot be considered decent. On the contrary, work that shows care and that contributes to the restoration of full human dignity, will help to ensure a sustainable future for future generations. And this dimension of care involves, first and foremost, the workers themselves”. [6]

In conclusion, I would like to share with you some “good news”. Recently, in Assisi, the town where Saint Francis and his first friars embraced poverty and proposed a radical new economy to the business leaders of their time, a thousand young economists and entrepreneurs reflected on shaping a new economy and subsequently drafted and signed a Covenant to reform the global economic system to better the lives of all people. I would like to share some of its major points with you today. I do this for two reasons: first, because too often young people are excluded; second, because creativity and new thinking often comes from the young – and we older people need to be courageous enough to stop and listen to them. Just as young people need to listen to the elderly, so we need to listen to young people. Here is what these young people proposed for a new economy for the common good, an “economy of the Gospel”, which entails:

·*an economy of peace and not of war* (Think about how much money is spent on the production of arms!)*;*

·*an economy that cares for creation and does not misuse it* (Think about the many instances of deforestation!)*;*

·*an economy at the service of the human person, the family and life, respectful of every woman, man, and child, the elderly, and especially the most frail and vulnerable;*

·*an economy where care replaces rejection and indifference;*

·*an economy that leaves no one behind, in order to build a society in which the stones rejected by the dominant mentality become cornerstones;*

·*an economy that recognizes and protects secure and dignified work for everyone;*

·*an economy where finance is a friend and ally of the real economy and of labour, and not against them.* [7] There is a danger that finance can render the economy “diluted” or, better, “effervescent”; and with such liquidity and “effervescence”, it will end up like the chain of Saint

Anthony!

Today, there are hundreds, thousands, millions, and perhaps billions of young people who are struggling to have access to the formal economic systems or even to their first paid jobs, in the hope that they can apply their academic learning, acquired skills, energy and enthusiasm. I encourage you, as mature and successful business leaders and entrepreneurs, to consider a new alliance with the young people who developed and are committed to that Covenant. To walk with them, to teach them and to learn from them, as together you shape “a new economy for the common good”. It is true that young people always create problems, but they have a flair for pointing out the right road to take!

Thank you for all that you do, and for your presence here. I bless this process that you have undertaken and I bless each of you and your families. And I ask you too, please, to remember to pray for me. Thank you!

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[1] *Message to Participants in the Meeting “Economy of Francesco”*, Assisi, 1 May 2019.

[2] *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church,* No. 333.

[3] *Video Message for the 109th Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO)*, 17 June 2021.

[4] *Message to Participants in the 108th Session of the International Labour Conference*, Geneva, 10-21 June 2021.

[5] *Video Message for the 7th International Day of Prayer and Reflection against Human Trafficking*, 8 February 2021.

[6] *Video Message for the 109th Meeting of the International Labour Organization (ILO)*, 17 June 2021.

[7] *Covenant for the Economy* with Participants in the Meeting, “Economy of Francesco”, Assisi, 24 September 2022.

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