



The Holy See

MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

SIGNED BY CARDINAL SECRETARY OF STATE PIETRO PAROLIN,

TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE SIXTH EDITION OF THE «PARIS PEACE FORUM 2023»

On the occasion of the Sixth Paris Peace Forum, His Holiness Pope Francis is pleased to join you with this message of encouragement, in the hope that this meeting – whose purpose is to strengthen dialogue between all continents in order to promote international cooperation and dialogue – may contribute to building a more just, united and peaceful world.

This year, the Forum is being held in an extremely painful global context. While we watch helplessly as armed conflicts multiply, bringing with them suffering, injustice and damage – some of it irreversible – to our common home, the Pope wants this Forum to be a sign of hope. He hopes that the commitments made will encourage sincere dialogue, based on listening to the cries of all those who suffer as a result of terrorism, violence in general and wars, all scourges that benefit only certain groups by feeding particular interests, unfortunately often disguised by noble intentions.

Peacebuilding is a slow, patient process, requiring the courage and practical commitment of all people of good will who care about the present and the future of humanity and the planet. Lasting peace is built day by day, through the recognition, respect and promotion of the dignity of the human person and his or her fundamental rights, among which the Holy See particularly acknowledges the human right to peace, which is a condition for the exercise of all other human rights.

In the year that marks the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we must admit that, for millions of people on every continent, the persistent gap between the solemn commitments made on 10 December 1948 and reality has yet to be bridged, and in some cases with great urgency. How many people, including children, are deprived of the fundamental and primary right to life and to physical and mental integrity as a result of hostilities between different groups or different countries? How many people are deprived of the most basic

rights as a result of conflicts, such as the right to drinking water and healthy food, but also the right to freedom of religion, health, decent housing, a quality education and dignified work? How many children are forced to take part, directly or indirectly, in fighting, and bear the physical, psychological and spiritual scars for the rest of their lives?

While reaffirming the inalienable right to self-defence and the responsibility to protect those whose lives are threatened, we must acknowledge that war is always a “defeat of humanity” (*General Audience*, 23 March 2022). No war is worth the tears of a mother who has seen her child mutilated or killed; no war is worth the loss of the life of even one human being, a sacred being created in the image and likeness of the Creator; no war is worth the poisoning of our common home; and no war is worth the despair of those who are forced to leave their homeland and are deprived, from one moment to the next, of their home and all the family, friendship, social and cultural ties that have been built up, sometimes over generations.

Peace is built not with weapons, but through patient listening, dialogue and cooperation, which remain the only means worthy of the human person in resolving differences. The Holy Father wishes to reiterate the Holy See’s unceasing call for arms to be silenced, for the production and trade of these instruments of death and destruction to be rethought, and for the path of gradual but complete disarmament to be resolutely pursued, so that the reasons for peace can finally be heard loud and clear!

As he thanks you for your attention, Pope Francis hopes that your discussions will be rich and fruitful, and that they will enable you to listen to and meet each other in the wealth of your diversity, so that the culture of peace may grow and bear tangible fruits of fraternity.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin
Secretary of State of His Holiness

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