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Audience with the Pope and visit to the Vatican of the Sheikha of Qatar

Vatican City, 4 June 2016 – Today at 11 a.m., in the Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in a private audience Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, president of the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. Her Highness Sheikha Moza informed the Holy Father on her many activities in the field of educational and social development at national and international level, and on the grave situation of schools in the various areas of conflict, and received his encouragement. The encounter, very cordial in nature, lasted for around 30 minutes.

The gift offered by Her Highness to the Holy Father was a valuable manuscript in Arabic of the Gospels, richly decorated and composed of 123 pages in Naskh calligraphy, produced in Ottoman Turkey in the 18th century. The Pope gave her a medallion depicting the olive tree of peace and the Arabic edition of his encyclical *Laudato si'*.

Subsequently, at the Secretariat of State, Her Highness met with Archbishop Giovanni Angelo Becciu, substitute of the Secretariat of State, accompanied by Msgr. Michael F. Crotty. The discussions focused on the situation of the Catholic community in Qatar.

Finally, in the so-called “Raphael Wing” of the Apostolic Palace, Her Highness was present at the signing of an Agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) between the Vatican Apostolic Library and the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development on behalf of the Qatar National Library. The Agreement was signed for the Qatar Foundation by His Excellency Dr. Hamad Al Kuwari and for the Apostolic Library by the Prefect, Msgr. Cesare Pasini.

Among the 80,000 manuscripts of the Vatican Library, subject of the general digitalisation project underway since 2010, the Vatican Library holds manuscripts regarding the history, culture, heritage and science of Qatar, the Gulf and other Islamic regions. The Vatican Library and the Qatar National Library, along with the Qatar Foundation, share a mutual interest in making these manuscripts accessible to all in digital form for the development of research. A Committee has therefore been established, which will work to implement all aspects of the agreement concerning conservation, restoration, digitalisation, description and accessibility of a group of manuscripts including those that relate to the history, culture, heritage and science of Qatar, the Gulf and other Islamic regions.

