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Meeting of the Management Board of the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel

From 21 to 25 February, in Dakar, Senegal, the annual meeting of the Management Board of the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel will take place. Entrusted by the Holy Father to the Pontifical Council Cor Unum since its institution in 1984, the Foundation now falls under the auspices of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. The meeting will be attended by the delegate secretary of the dicastery, Msgr. Giampietro Dal Toso, in his role as Holy See Observer. A visit is also scheduled from the apostolic nuncio in Senegal, Archbishop Michael Wallace Banach. During the meeting, projects awaiting funding will be examined. A total of 43 projects were funded in 2016, in six countries, for an estimated total of around 550,000 dollars. Until 2015 there were around 3,200 projects, for a total of more than 37 million dollars, according to a press release issued today by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

The members of the Management Board are Bishop Lucas Sanou Kalfa of Banfora (Burkina Faso), president; Bishop Paul Abel Mamba of Ziguinchor (Senegal), vice president; Bishop Martin Albert Happe of Nuakchott (Mauritania), treasurer; Bishop Ambroise Ouédraogo of Maradi (Niger); Bishop Ildo Fortes of Mindelo (Cabo Verde); Archbishop Edmond Djitangar of N'Djamena (Chad); Bishop Robert Patrick Ellison of Banjul (Gambia); Bishop Pedro Carlos Zilli of Ode Bafata (Guinea Bissau); and Bishop Augustin Traoré of Segou (Mali).

With the collaboration, in particular, of the episcopal conferences of Italy and Germany, and the local Church, the Foundation will implement, on behalf of the Holy Father, projects against desertification and for the management and development of agricultural units, for water pumps, for the improvement of drinking water and for renewable energy, to assist the communities of member states (Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Chad, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal). The Foundation is also engaged in the training of specialised technical personnel. In addition, over the years it has also been able to favour interreligious dialogue; indeed, the majority of beneficiaries are of Muslim faith.

The latest data of the Human Development Index, which measures the level of human development for each country, show that among the last twenty countries on the list, 19 are in Africa, and of these, seven are in the Sahel area. The situation is aggravated in the present day by frequent food crises, the depletion of natural resources, especially water, and violence perpetrated against the population by extremist groups.

