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Decree of the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family and Life “Associations of the Faithful” regulating the exercise of government in international associations of the faithful, private and public, and in other bodies with legal personality subject to direct supervision by the same Dicastery

GENERAL DECREE

The international associations of the faithful and their internal government have been the object of particular reflection and a consequent discernment by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, on the basis of its competence.

The Church recognises that the faithful have, because of their baptism, the right of association, and it protects their freedom to found and govern them. Among the various forms in which this right is exercised are the associations of the faithful (cf. cc. 215; 298-329 of the *Code of Canon Law*), which, particularly since Vatican Council II, have flourished considerably, producing an abundance of graces and apostolic fruits for the Church and the world of today.

The internal government of associations, recognised and protected as indicated above, should, however, be exercised within the limits established by the general norms of the Church, the statutory norms of each association, and in conformity with the dispositions of the ecclesiastical authority competent for their recognition and for the supervision of their life and activities.

The coessentiality of charismatic and hierarchical gifts in the Church (cf. *Iuvenescit Ecclesia*, 10) indeed requires that government within the associations of the faithful be exercised in coherence with their ecclesial mission, as a service ordered to realising their own purposes and to the good of their members.

Therefore, it is necessary that the exercise of government be properly organised within ecclesial communion and carried out as a means to the purposes that the association pursues.

In the process of defining the criteria for prudently guiding government in the associations, the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life has considered it necessary to regulate the terms of office in government, with regard to their duration and number, as well as the representativeness of governing bodies, in order to promote a healthy

renewal and to prevent misappropriations that have indeed led to violations and abuses.

Given these premises, and considering the usefulness of generational change in governing bodies and the appropriateness of promoting change in responsibilities in government;

equally, taking into account the need to provide for terms of government which allow the implementation of projects suited to the purposes of the association;

also, considering the role of the founder in the appropriate configuration, development and stability of associative life, by virtue of the charism that gave rise to the association;

in order to insure the proper functioning of government in all international associations of the faithful;

having consulted experts in this field and other Dicasteries of the Roman Curia as far as their competence is concerned;

given article 18 of the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* on the Roman Curia, article 126 of the *General Regulations of the Roman Curia*, canons 29, 30 and 305 of the *Code of Canon Law*, and articles 1, 5 and 7 § 1 of the *Statutes* of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life;

the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, in the exercise of its functions and by mandate of the Supreme Authority

decrees,

with reference to international associations of the faithful recognised or erected by the Apostolic See and subject to the direct supervision of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, as follows.

Art. 1. – The terms of office in the central governing body at international level can have a maximum duration of five years each.

Art. 2 § 1. – The same person can hold positions in the central governing body at international level for a maximum period consecutive period of ten years.

Art. 2 § 2. – After the maximum period of ten years, re-election is possible only after a vacancy for one term.

Art. 2 § 3. – The provision set out in article 2 § 2 does not apply to the person who is elected moderator, this person being able to exercise this function independently of time already spent in other positions within the central governing body at international level.

Art. 2 § 4. – Anyone who has exercised the function of moderator for a maximum period of ten years cannot access this position again. This person can, however, hold other positions in the central governing body at international level after a vacancy of two terms relative to this other position.

Art. 3. – All *pleno iure* members are to have active voice, direct or indirect, in the constitution of the bodies that elect the central governing body at international level.

Art. 4 § 1. - Associations in which, at the time of coming into force of this Decree, positions in the central governing body at international level are conferred on members who have exceeded the limits referred to in articles 1 and 2, must provide for new elections no later than twenty-four months from the coming into force of this Decree.

Art. 4 § 2. - Associations in which, at the time of coming into force of this Decree, positions in the central governing body at international level are conferred on members who will exceed the limits referred to in articles 1 and 2 during the period of their current term, must provide for new elections no later than twenty-four months from reaching the maximum limit imposed by this Decree.

Art. 5. – Founders can be dispensed from the norms referred to in articles 1, 2 and 4 by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

Art. 6. – These provisions do not apply to positions in government tied to the application of the norms of clerical associations, institutes of consecrated life or societies of apostolic life.

Art. 7. – This Decree also applies, with the exception of the norm referred to in article 3, to bodies not recognised or erected as international associations of the faithful to which juridical personality has been granted and which are subject to the direct supervision of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life.

Art. 8. – From the coming into force of this Decree and until the approval of any statutory changes by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, these provisions abrogate any norms in the statutes of the associations that might be contrary to them.

Art. 9. – This Decree, promulgated through publication in the newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, comes into force three months from the date of its publication. The Decree will also be published in the official commentary *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

The Supreme Pontiff Francis, in the Audience granted on June 2nd 2021 to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, has approved this General Decree *in forma specifica*, having force of law, and the Explanatory Note that accompanies it.

Done in Rome, in the offices of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, June 3rd 2021, Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ.

Card. Kevin Farrell
Prefect

P. Alexandre Awi Mello, I.Sch.
Secretary
