

Your Holiness,

It is my honor to greet you on behalf of the 87 NGOs of Catholic inspiration who are gathered together for this important Forum. Over the past two days we have been enriched by the different gifts brought by the diverse types of organizations present, including Catholic action movements, youth movements, humanitarian and relief organizations, organizations related to ecclesial lay movements and those sponsored by religious communities.

Although, each organization present has their own unique expertise, areas of focus and charism, we share several common concerns based on the witness and call of Jesus Christ and the Social Teachings of the Church. At the heart of these concerns is our common desire to protect the sacredness of human life and to the common good.

Our organizations are some of the most active, effective and creditable NGOs working with Intergovernmental bodies, taking the lead on key issues in our world today, such as family, education, development, youth, culture, HIV/AIDS, human rights, migration, employment and peace.

Your Holiness, as we have met together, we have seen the three-fold impact of our mission. First, we play a role as advocates, taking the experience, voices and expertise of our members and the people we serve to the institutions. Through lobbying and interventions, Catholic NGOs have been able to help insert Christian values into international agreements. Secondly, we help in forming the Christian conscience by educating our members on issues that impact the entire human family and by inspiring them to actions of love, charity and justice. Finally, we help create among our members around the world an active sense of solidarity.

In these three roles, we do not act alone. The complexities of our world today call us to dialogue and work with other NGOs and partners of all faith traditions and those that are non-confessional. In the same spirit, we, the Catholic NGOs hope to develop among ourselves a network of dialogue, coordination and mutual support at the international level and around the different centers. At the same time, without losing our autonomy as NGOs, we affirm the need to also deepen the existing dialogue and communion with the Holy See, especially with the Secretariat of State, the Apostolic Nuncios and the relevant dicasteries.

We are hopeful that that the outcomes of this Forum will help us to deepen our dialogue and communion among ourselves and between us and the Holy See.

Holy Father, we thank you for your calling us together for this Forum and we look forward to your continued blessings for the important mission of Catholic inspired NGOs in working for solidarity, peace and integral human development.

KEVIN J. AHERN - Outgoing President of IMCS-Pax Romana