

**Message of His Eminence Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran
President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (Holy See)**

Dear Chairman of the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue,
Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to send to all of you, through the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID), the Reverend Father Miguel Ayuso, my cordial greetings and my best wishes for the success of this conference, organised on the occasion, of the 10th anniversary of the so called “Doha Conference”.

Since the beginning of this dialogue initiative in 2003, this Pontifical Council has supported it, actively participating in all the encounters. This in fact is the manner by which the PCID encourages and promotes dialogue based on truth, love and shared respect, aimed at furthering mutual knowledge, understanding and cooperation for the common good, by participating in programs such as this whenever possible. In this context, I would like to make a particular mention of the 2004 Conference, organized both by the Faculty of Sharia, University of Qatar, and the PCID on *Religious Liberty: a Theme for a Christian-Muslim Dialogue*.

An anniversary is always an occasion to thank Almighty God for what He has enabled us to do and to ask for His pardon for what we have failed to do or for what has been done in an inappropriate manner. Looking to the future, we ask for God’s light and strength in order to know what we have to do and to have the courage to realize it.

A word of appreciation and gratitude from this Pontifical Council goes also to all those who, in one way or another, contributed to the birth and continuity of this initiative and to its on-going success.

You surely know about the important events that have taken place in the Vatican in the last two months, starting with the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI from the Pontificate to the election of his successor, Pope Francis. In all these events, not only Catholics and Christians of various denominations, but also persons and organizations of other religions, in particular Jews and Muslims, expressed their closeness to the Church and participated in important events such as the last General Audience of Pope Benedict XVI, on 27 February 2013, the Inauguration of the Pontificate of Pope Francis, on 19 March 2013 and the Audience with Representatives of the Churches and Ecclesial Communities and of the Different Religions, the following day.

In his address to the Representatives of Different Religions, Pope Francis gave special emphasis to dialogue with Jews and Muslims. Addressing the Jews, he said: “to whom we are linked by a most spiritual bond”, trusting that “we can make greater progress in that fraternal dialogue.” Addressing the followers of other religions, the Pope greeted “first Muslims, who worship God as one, living and merciful, and invoke him in prayer...” To them and to all other believers present he said: “I greatly

appreciate your presence: in it, I see a tangible sign of a will to grow in mutual esteem and in cooperation for the common good of humanity.”

Then the Pope stressed “the importance of promoting friendship and respect between men and women of different religious traditions” as well as “the responsibility which all of us have for our world, for the whole of creation, which we must love and protect”. Then he drew to the attention of everyone that “There is much that we can do to benefit the poor, the needy and those who suffer, and to favour justice, promote reconciliation and build peace”. However, there are priorities: “...before all else we need to keep alive in our world the thirst for the absolute, and to counter the dominance of a one-dimensional vision of the human person”.

Dear friends,

According to Pope Benedict XVI, “Inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue between Christians and Muslims cannot be reduced to an optional extra. It is, in fact, a vital necessity, on which in large measure our future depends” (*Meeting with Representatives of Some Muslim Communities*, Cologne, 20 August 2005).

This remains always valid! And I am pleased to reiterate today the commitment of the Catholic Church to dialogue.

From the Vatican, 15 April 2013