



# The Holy See

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**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER FRANCIS  
TO THOSE PARTICIPATING IN THE CONFERENCE ON THE SOCIAL USE OF THE  
PROPERTY CONFISCATED FROM THE MAFIA, ORGANIZED BY THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY  
OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

[19-20 September 2024]

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*President, Your Eminence, Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear friends,*

I extend a warm welcome to you all, participants in the Conference on the Social Use of Assets Confiscated from the Mafia, organized by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, and which you are holding in these days.

The theme you are considering in this convention is oriented towards the mitigation of criminal organizations through the recovery of the common good. Faced with the wound that transnational organized crime implies for society, all that remains is to have the political will to tackle a worldwide problem with a worldwide reaction, as the then UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, indicated in the preface to the Palermo Convention and its protocols.

Organized crime, which manifests itself as a structured group that stabilizes over time and acts jointly to commit crimes for the purpose of obtaining a material or economic benefit, is transnational in character and embraces all the major forms of trafficking. The fight against these is one of the most important challenges for the international community, since it represents, along with terrorism, the most relevant non-military threat to the security of every nation and to international economic stability.

In a scenario in which crime knows neither state borders nor national sovereignty, there is now an international consensus with regard to the fact that states, via their institutions, must not only

investigate and judge organized crime, but must also cooperate with each other to identify its assets and recover them, in order to make it impossible to continue its criminal activities. But it is necessary to bear in mind that the recovery of assets must not be limited to this criminal policy objective, but must be inspired by the repair and reconstruction of the common good, defined by the Conciliar Constitution *Gaudium et spes* as “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment” (no. 26).

Organized crime, in its brutality, works against the common good; it attacks millions of men and women who have the right to live their own life and raise their own children with dignity and free from hunger and the fear of violence, oppression or injustice; it inveighs against socially marginalized groups who are particularly vulnerable to the activities of organized crime. It is neither possible nor tolerable to forget these victims, because only by thinking of them can one comprehend the damage caused by organized crime, and only by understanding such damage can one discern how to assist, protect and repair, essential aspects to resolve conflicts and to pacify. In this sense, the Italian model is a good example of how the proceeds of crime can be used for the reparation of the damage caused to victims and to society; of how they can serve in the reconstruction of the common good and pacification.

With the conviction that it is indispensable to adopt an integrated approach in the fight against crime and to strengthen international cooperation, I invite you to focus your discussions during these days on the urgency of recovering the good of all people, men and women, the good of each person, where everyone counts and no-one is rejected, where the common project, in the service of human dignity, exceeds the individual sum of each one.

Finally, as I assure you of my remembrance in prayer and my best wishes for the success of your conference, I encourage you to share your experiences and to reflect, but without losing sight of the victims and the community, taking action and intending law and justice as a practice aimed at building a better world.

And with these sentiments, I confirm my prayers for you and your families, I bless you and I ask you, please, to pray for me.

From the Vatican, 19 September 2024

Francis

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