

Message by President Charles Michel at the event celebrating the first International Day of Human Fraternity

Today marks the very first International Day of Human Fraternity. I'm pleased to join this celebration, established by the United Nations, to promote tolerance, peaceful coexistence and interfaith dialogue between communities.

I'd like to thank His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayyeb, for launching this initiative.

A day of human fraternity is needed today more than ever, as the world battles the COVID pandemic.

Today reminds us that the only way out of this global crisis is through greater fraternity – and solidarity – between peoples.

The nearly 8 billion people living on this planet can often seem so different from one another. Living in different communities, with different beliefs, religions, opinions, languages, and different ways of life.

Yet, if we look closely, we are not so different after all. We all aspire to the same things. Peace. Dignity. And human rights. To think freely. To believe freely. And to express ourselves freely. And to be respected, as individuals, and as members of our communities.

The more we see each other from afar, the more we see our differences. The more we look each other in the eye, the more we see our own reflection. Our common humanity.

This is why coming together, for dialogue, for understanding, is more important than ever.

Dialogue sparks understanding. Understanding inspires tolerance. And tolerance leads to respect. This virtuous chain can make peace and fraternity possible. For believers – no matter their creed – and for non-believers alike.

It's what unites us as human beings. And it's what nurtures the mutual understanding that leads to tolerance and respect between communities.

I wish you a thoughtful and happy Day of Fraternal Humanity! Thank you.

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