



Meeting with the EPP Group's Interreligious Dialogue Working Group

H.E. Mgr. Mariano Crociata, President of COMECE

Brussels, 25 October 2023

Dear friends,

First, I would like to thank you very much for this most valuable opportunity to have a dialogue and a discussion with you.

The circumstances in which our meeting takes place do not allow us, even if we would like to, to ignore them. The ongoing wars affect the European Union in many ways: the war in Ukraine, which has been going on for almost two years, and the war in the Holy Land, consequence of the terrorist attack of the 7th of October. In addition to our sorrow for the victims, especially the innocent ones, and the concern for the living conditions of the populations under attack, there is also concern about the geopolitical and economic consequences of these conflicts, as well as fears for their possible extension. The position taken by the European Union is of course to be appreciated, given the peculiarly complex international political situation.

Although these events almost completely take most of our attention, especially in public communication, the reality of migration does not appear any less dramatic than before. And yet the efforts made to find common answers to it do not always seem to lead to strong unitary decisions and significant results. The accumulation of

problems certainly threatens to make everything more complicated and, above all, to make more tense the already difficult internal relations at different levels.

In the background - *and this is the third area to which I would like to bring your attention* - the European election deadline next year is already looming with all its uncertainties. Among these, which are many, two seem to stand out. On the one hand, the disinterest of the voters, which would have the effect, among other things, of further distancing the institutions of the European Union from the peoples they are supposed to represent. On the other hand, the risk of an extremist polarisation, as an effect of populist exasperation in the illusion of finding simplistic solutions to very complex issues.

On all three aspects mentioned, there are reflections and initiatives that are the responsibility of the institutional actors, starting with you, European parliamentarians. On these I really cannot say much, not least because I am not qualified to do so. The Church looks at all this not as a spectator, but as a participant in a process in which the lives of the people who form our communities and countries are at stake.

There is a long-term work to be done that cannot simply be postponed under the pressure of urgencies. The spirit of the Conference on the Future of Europe must find new forms that nurture dialogue and closeness between citizens and institutions. We need time for this, but we also need a way of doing politics that does not look only to what is convenient in the short term, but that is able to arouse and guide consensus on the basis of convincing and shared long-term reasons. This is my wish for your important and demanding commitment. Thank you very much.