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Synod of Bishops 2019 in Rome – Special Assembly for the Pan-Amazon region

Statement by Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Member of the Council of Cardinals and President of the German Bishops' Conference

At the Synod of Bishops in Rome, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, Member of the Council of Cardinals and President of the German Bishops' Conference, spoke on the Instrumentum laboris. We document his statement before the Synod:

1. The *Instrumentum laboris* describes the destruction of Amazonia: “The massive felling of trees, the extermination of the tropical forest by intentional forest fires, the expansion of the agricultural frontier and monocultures are the cause of the current regional climate imbalances, with obvious effects on the global climate, with planetary dimensions such as great droughts and increasingly frequent floods.“ (IL 54) This destruction of nature fundamentally contradicts the Christian understanding of responsibility for creation.

2. As the “lung of our planet“, Amazonia is of great importance for the global climate and, with its diversity of species, also a valuable natural heritage. This extraordinary biodiversity is not only useful for humans, for example in medicine, but every species has its own value. This treasure of mankind, however, is threatened. If forest areas continue to be cleared – for which the industrialized countries are partly responsible in view of global trade links – the tropical forest threatens to dry up completely, resulting in incalculable consequences for the global climate.

3. The climate is a global public good and we have the mission to protect it and preserve it for future generations, in Amazonia and around the world. This requires a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels and comprehensive ecological change. This change can only succeed with the right political and social framework conditions that prevent the ecological and social resulting costs of economic action from being passed on to uninvolved third parties. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol speak of “common but differentiated responsibilities“ between countries. Accordingly, the major industrial nations have a special responsibility for climate protection in view of their emissions of greenhouse gases. The industrialized countries can take the lead in ecological change and develop sustainable consumption and production patterns. They also have a duty to support the countries of the South in

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adapting to the climate change that is already being observed. Ultimately, we are talking about global solidarity, the basis of which is a “new notion of progress“ (cf. also *LS* 46, 194).

4. If we want to rescue the Amazon territory, as the *Instrumentum laboris* demands (*IL* 56), we need an integral ecology and a change of perspective that leads us to a new balance between mankind and nature and a peaceful coexistence of people. In this context, we are not concerned with individual questions, but with a new, comprehensive perspective, as Romano Guardini has already analysed: “The only measure for properly evaluating an age is to ask to what extent it fosters the development and attainment of a full and authentically meaningful human existence, in accordance with the peculiar character and the capacities of that age.” (cf. *EG* 224) It is part of integral ecology and economy to put an end to corruption, exploitation and global indifference and to review our actions again and again for the effects they have on nature and on people in the world. It is as you, Holy Father, have expressed in your Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*: Everything in the world is connected!