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Message from
The Rt Hon David Cameron MP,
Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

I am delighted that Pope Benedict XVI is to visit the United Kingdom. His visit will be a very special moment for all of us, whether Catholics or not, whether Christians or not. It will be a visit like no other, combining large scale liturgical events – which are the responsibility of the Catholic Church in the UK – meetings with representatives of civil society and of different faiths, and official occasions that will offer opportunities both for discussion of issues of shared concern and for some powerful symbolic moments that reach back into our common history.

The Holy See has a huge reach and influence in the world and is an important partner for the British Government. We share many values and objectives, in areas such as development and the fight against poverty; climate change; preventing and resolving conflicts and disarmament. We welcome the strong stand that the Pope and the Holy See have taken on many of these issues, for example the Pope's strong statements in support of assistance to relieve the suffering caused by the recent flooding in Pakistan; the efforts the Catholic Church has made to push forward the process towards an Arms Trade Treaty; and the way the Vatican has set an example through its progress towards becoming the world's first carbon neutral state. Of course there are areas, which are well documented, where we do not see things from the same perspective, and where we must respect each others points of view.

I also want to recognise the contribution that the Catholic Church makes in British society, both as a provider of education through the

network of Catholic schools and colleges and through the efforts of the Church and of Catholic charities to assist the poor and the disadvantaged. More widely, faith is a fundamental part of many people's lives, a source of moral guidance and an important part of the fabric of civil society. Pope Benedict's visit is a chance to focus on the role of society and the values that inform our culture and our traditions.

It is also a moment to think about the moral aspects of international policy. Our approach to issues like climate change or conflict prevention should reflect our own interests, but it should also recognise the obligations we have to others, whether those who suffer as a result of poverty, war or natural disaster, or the future generations who will have to live with the consequences of our success or failure in dealing with threats to the climate or to the environment.

I look forward greatly to hearing what Pope Benedict has to say when he comes to the UK and I know the visit will be followed with interest not only by the UK's Catholics but by people of all creeds and backgrounds in the UK and by many more around the world. This is a historic visit and one that I hope will inspire many in Britain and will mark a further step in the development of our relationship with the Holy See. **F**

RT HON DAVID CAMERON MP