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## EUROPEAN CARITAS GATHERING HELD IN SLOVENIA WITH EMPHASIS ON THE EUROPEAN YEAR FOR COMBATING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

*Distinguished guests include European Commissioner Vladimír Špidla, Slovenian Minister Marjeta Cotman and MEP Marie Panayotopoulos – Cassiotou*

**Pressinfo Caritas Europa. Brussels, 20 May 2008.** – Over 100 participants from 44 European countries are attending the international gathering of European Caritas organisations hosted by Caritas Slovenia in Bled on 21-24 May 2008.

The gathering shall contribute to reflection on how to shift the balance from social exclusion to social equity in Europe. It will focus on social security and social protection: different models will be analysed through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching in the perspective of ongoing changes in demography (family structure and relations), labour relations and welfare state.

Building and balancing social security in Europe but also overseas – selected approaches followed in Europe will be presented while illustrating the role that development agencies can have in building social security at grass roots level outside Europe. Based on the knowledge and experience accumulated in their own countries, member organisations of Caritas Europa can make a valuable contribution in this area.

Aware that different social models are followed throughout Europe, Caritas Europa has recently adopted “Basic Principles for a Sustainable Social System”, a compilation of criteria to be fulfilled by any social system. Main goal is social cohesion as the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all people, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation. Participants will engage in several interactive workshops related to this topic.

The event will also be an occasion to illustrate the increased collaboration of Caritas Europa with EU institutions. The organisation takes part in the PROGRESS community programme on the basis of a three-year Framework Partnership Agreement with the European Commission carrying the name of INCLUSION. It also strongly supports the proposal to proclaim 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. In a special session dedicated to the EU and the Slovenian EU Presidency, representatives of Caritas Europa will discuss with the distinguished guests, representing the European Commission, the Slovenian EU Presidency and the European Parliament, perspectives for this European Year including the commitment of the Caritas network.

A press conference is being held on Friday, 23 May 2008, at 13.30 - Hotel Golf in Bled with the participation of: Erny Gillen (President of Caritas Europa), Marius Wanders (Secretary General of Caritas Europa), Alojzij Štefan (Secretary General of Caritas Slovenia), Vladimír Špidla (European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities) and Marjeta Cotman (Slovenian Minister for Labour, Family and Social Affairs).

For more information, please contact:

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