

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO PARTICIPANTS AT THE WORLD CONGRESS
OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PENAL LAW**

Sala Regia

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Global financial capital is the source of serious crimes not only against property but also against people and the environment. It is organized crime that is responsible, among other things, for the over-indebtedness of states and the plundering of the natural resources of our planet.

Criminal law must not remain unconnected with conduct in which, by taking advantage of asymmetrical situations, a dominant position is exploited to the detriment of collective welfare. This is the case, for example, when the prices of public debt securities are artificially reduced through speculation, without worrying that this will affect or aggravate the economic situation of entire nations (see *Oeconomicae et pecuniariae quaestiones. Considerations for an ethical discernment regarding some aspects of the current economic-financial system*, 17).

These are crimes that have the seriousness of crimes against humanity, when they lead to hunger, misery, forced migration and death from avoidable diseases, environmental disaster and ethnocide of indigenous peoples.

Protection of the environment by criminal law

It is true that the criminal response comes when the crime has been committed, that it does not repair damage or prevent repetition, and that it rarely has dissuasive effects. It is also true that, because of its structural selectivity, the sanctioning function usually affects the most vulnerable sectors. I am also aware that there is a punitivist current that claims to resolve the most varied social problems through the penal system.