**Christmas Greetings**

Cardinal Leonardo Sandri Friday, 6 December 2019

Your Excellencies, my distinguished guests,

Thank you for coming here this evening, as we approach the Feast of Christmas. This is the first of many exchanges of greetings in this season. It is a very friendly event.We here, are people of various Religious Confessions, diplomatic and lay people. However, Christmas is a Feast for eveyone. It is the Birth of Jesus Christ, who, for us Christians is the Son of God; for Muslims, a Great Prophet; for everyone, a Person who changed history, at the time of the Roman Emperor, Cesar Augustus.

This building where we are gathered this evening was commissioned by, Mgr Angelo Roncalli (who here was Apostolic Delegate an later was elected Pope John XXIII)..This Chapel is dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of Jesus Christ. It is here that the Holy Eucharist is celebrated in different languages each week– on Saturday in Italian, and on Sunday in English and in French.

I asked myself, in these days, what could I wish for you all. What they are my Christmas Whises? Jesus Christ, at his birth, according to our Gospels, was introduced by the Angels, messengers of God, as a bearers of Peace. So, I wish each and everyone of you, Peace. Peace within yourselves, peace in your families, peace in Bulgaria and in this South BalKan Region. Peace in our Countries and in the World.

Pope Francis, last May, was here with you for two days. I accompanied him. His visit ended, on the evening of May 6th, here in Sofia, with an event which Pope Frances gave great importance. An Event for Peace, together with the representatives of all the Churches and Religious Confessions of Bulgaria. On this occasion Pope Frances sent a Message of Peace. I accompany my wish for Peace with the Pope's Words

*“Dear Brothers and Sisters, We have prayed for peace in words inspired by Saint Francis of Assisi, who was so greatly in love with God the Creator and Father of all. A love that he showed with similar passion and deep respect for the beauty of creation and for all those whom he encountered on his pilgrim way.(…)That love also led Saint Francis to become a true peacemaker. Each of us is called to follow in his footsteps by becoming a peacemaker, an “artisan” of peace. Peace is both a gift and a task; it must be implored and worked for(…). Peace requires and demands that we adopt dialogue as our path, mutual understanding as our code of conduct, and reciprocal understanding as our method and standard (cf. Document on Human Fraternity, Abu Dhabi, 4 February 2019). In this way, we can focus on what unites us, show mutual respect for our differences, and encourage one another to look to a future of opportunity and dignity.especially for future generations.”…Let there be peace on earth: in our families, in our hearts, and above all in those places where so many voices have been silenced by war….. May all work together to make this dream come true….. May each of us, wherever we may be, in all that we do, be able to say: “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace”. This was also the dream of Pope Saint John XXIII…”.*

And so, Happy Christmas and every good wish to each and everyone of you! And I ask for you the blessing of God