

Vatican abuse summit followup decides to hold more followups

On Monday, in the Vatican's first follow-up to last week's child abuse summit, officials emphasized "encounter" and the need for concrete responses as called for by Catholics.

The focus of the four-hour meeting Feb. 25 was "first and unanimously" on Pope Francis' desire for encounter, according to a statement by papal spokesman Alessandro Gisotti.

In attendance were some senior officials of the Secretariat of State, the heads of several Vatican dicasteries, and abuse summit organizers Fr. Federico Lombardi, Fr. Hans Zollner, Archbishop Charles Scicluna, Cardinal Oswald Gracias, and Cardinal Blase Cupich.

The group agreed to continue to hold similar interdicasterial meetings "in the name of synodality and synergy" to monitor progress on commitments made at the summit.

Gisotti said that dicastery heads, speaking openly, affirmed their commitment to following "the example of Pope Francis in the fight against abuses," with an emphasis on encounter and on listening to victims.

Other discussion topics during the meeting were the need for better child protection training and greater involvement from laity, Gisotti said.

Organizers outlined for officials the principles behind the forthcoming documents and task forces – the promised outcomes of the abuse summit which were announced Sunday.

The concrete commitments made at the end of the Vatican's sex abuse summit Sunday included the publication of a *motu proprio* from Pope Francis "on the protection of minors and vulnerable persons," Lombardi announced Feb. 24.

Vatican City State is supposed also to receive in the coming weeks its own new child protection law, and the Vicariate of Vatican City new child protection guidelines. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will publish a "vademecum," or handbook, with the tasks and obligations of bishops, Lombardi said, according to a Catholic News Agency report.

Another measure slated to take place over the next months is the creation of task forces specifically to help local Churches in need of help in solving problems and developing initiatives in their bishops' conferences and dioceses.

The summit on the protection of minors in the Church took place Feb. 21-24, and included the participation, from around the world, of around 190 presidents of bishops' conferences, heads of Eastern Catholic Churches, and several superiors general of religious congregations.

The meeting was called in response to the crisis of clergy sexual abuse around the world, with a stated purpose of educating the world's bishops on their responsibility for protecting minors from abuse within the Church.