



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the One-day Intersessional seminar on the role of the family
in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of older persons
Panel 2 “*Role of the family in providing long-term care and support to older persons*”
Geneva, 11 June 2018

Mr. Chair,

Allow me at the outset to thank the distinguished panellists for their insightful interventions.

In order to promote and protect the enjoyment of human rights by older persons and to foster their dignity and well-being, society must overcome what Pope Francis calls the “throw-away culture”, wherein “the elderly [...] are often cast aside, especially when infirm and viewed as a burden”¹. A healthy and balanced society, rather, will ensure and enable supportive environments for people in old age where they, in turn, become in the first-person agents of development for all.

This is the reason why, in addition to services provided by Governments, the role played by families “in providing support and informal care to older persons”² is so important. It is through family relationships that solidarity is learned and enjoyed thanks “above all to the responsible and complementary roles of each of its members, particularly the father and the mother”³.

The contribution of families as informal caregivers has to be seriously taken into consideration. In addition to protecting their human rights, they should have access to medical and human resources training, counselling and financial, social and psychological support⁴.

Governments, therefore, should consider supporting families that take care of their elders, *inter alia*, by way of economic incentives, considering fiscal and job policies that take into account the benefit that society as a whole derives by the assistance offered to older persons by their family.

Social conditions vary greatly around the world and yet the dynamics that tie generations together must be respected in their nature in order to foster a culture of life and respect of human rights for all.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

¹ Pope Francis, Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 8 January 2018.

² Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, Spain, 8-12 April 2002, Political Declaration, Article 15.

³ Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 2014, n.1.

⁴ Cfr. Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, A/HRC/33/44, N. 40.