



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 38<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council  
Item 3 – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

*Geneva, 19 June 2018*

Mr. President,

The Holy See Delegation takes note of the intervention of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education.

My Delegation wishes to reaffirm that every human being has an inalienable right to an education, which aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his/her ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which he or she is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he or she will share.<sup>1</sup>

The 2030 Agenda asks Governments to allocate adequate financial resources in order that all people may have “life-long learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society”<sup>2</sup>. This is an essential precondition to help ensure that “no one is left behind”<sup>3</sup> on the path towards an integral human development.

The International Community, for its part, should not miss the occasion to show its solidarity by supporting the efforts of those Countries that struggle to ensure that their people may enjoy this right<sup>4</sup>. The Catholic Church continually strives to contribute in this effort through its network of more than 200.000 schools<sup>5</sup>, and more than 1.000 Catholic universities.

Mr. President,

In a globalized world, education needs to “practise the grammar of dialogue that forms encounter and appreciation of the cultural and religious diversities.”<sup>6</sup> Such an important goal, however, cannot be achieved by means of an “ideological colonisation”, which conveys erroneous ideas about the nature of society and the human person that clash with the wisdom of peoples and religions.

“There is [, on the contrary,] a need to respect the rights of peoples and cultures and to appreciate that the development of a social group presupposes a historical process which takes

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Second Vatican Council, *Gravissimum Educationis*, N.1.

<sup>2</sup> A/RES/70/1, N.25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, N.4.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. A/HRC/RES/8//4, pp.7.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. *Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae* 2016, p.250.

<sup>6</sup> Pope Francis, *Address to Congregation for Catholic Education*, 9 February 2017.

place within a cultural context and demands the constant and active involvement of local people from within their proper culture.”<sup>7</sup>

From this perspective, the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate children rests with parents. Recognising this principle means also the possibility for families to choose the schools that better reflect their fundamental values.

Such freedom is indeed crucial to allow education to play a deeper role in the integral advancement of a given society<sup>8</sup>, “taking into consideration that integral human development and the full exercise of human dignity cannot be imposed, but rather allowed to unfold for each individual, for every family, in relation to others and in a right relationship with those areas in which human social life develops.”<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, Mr. President, to uphold the right to education indeed ensures to boys and girls, the citizens of tomorrow, a participation in the richness of the cultural heritage of their society and a preparation for dialogue with men and women of an ever more interconnected world. In such way, they may become agents of peace and of integral human development.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>7</sup> Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si'*, N.144.

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. Pope Francis, *Address at the Meeting with the members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation*, 25 September 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Letter dated 25 September 2016 from the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, A/71/430, N.7.