



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 38th Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 3 – Report of the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking

Geneva, 21 June 2018

Mr. President,

Trafficking in persons constitutes the largest manifestation of modern slavery and “a shocking offence against human dignity and a grave violation of fundamental human rights”¹. In our globalised and interconnected world, with more than 900 million people² on the move, this transnational crime has developed as a lucrative business, taking advantage of conflict, misery, corruption, lack of education and the struggle for a better future. Albeit the number of trafficked men is rising³, women and children represent the biggest part of victims, often sold by their relatives and forced into marriage, sex or labour.

Giving his long-standing attention to this terrible crime, Pope Francis, four years ago, assisted at the launch of the Santa Marta Group that engages law enforcement agencies and religious actors to consider common actions that aim to improve cooperation to eradicate trafficking in persons and modern slavery, placing the victims at the very centre of its strategy. Indeed, if trafficking is led by *organised* crime, then we need an organised response. In the words of Pope Francis: engaging “leaders in law enforcement, research and public policy, and pastoral assistance, [The Santa Marta Group] offer[s] an essential contribution to addressing the causes and effects of this modern-day scourge, which continues to cause untold human suffering”⁴.

The Special Rapporteur highlights how human trafficking and smuggling are often blurred, since they are frequently interlinked with mixed migration flows. Therefore, registration and screening systems should be reinforced to detect and protect victims, or their suffering will continue even after their arrival in countries of destination. Existing international instruments already address the issue; however, additional national legislations are needed to not criminalise victims, to prosecute traffickers and consumers and to dismantle illegal networks. Other useful measures include:

¹ Pope John Paul II, Letter to Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran on the occasion of the International Conference “Twenty-First Century Slavery – The Human Rights Dimensions to Trafficking in Human Beings”, 15 May 2002.

² IOM, “Migration and migrants: A global overview”, in IOM (2017) *World Migration Report 2018*.

³ UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2016*.

⁴ Pope Francis, “Greeting to Members of the Santa Marta Group”, 9 February 2018.

prevention, protection and re-integration of victims; using convicted traffickers' assets for assisting victims; birth registration; opening legal paths for migration; collaboration among involved actors; and education. We can defeat trafficking in persons only by eliminating the culture of consumerism, which feeds it.

Furthermore, we need to foster a new culture of encounter centred on respect for the inalienable human dignity of every person. Indeed, every person is created free – and in God's image – and enjoys a dignity with fundamental human rights. No one is born to be treated as a slave.

Thank you, Mr. President.