



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the
Standing Committee on Programs and Finances of the
International Organization for Migration (IOM)
**Agenda Item 17 – Exchange of views on “Gender mainstreaming at IOM: Concrete
achievements and identified gaps”**
Geneva, 28 June 2018

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

My Delegation is grateful for this opportunity to discuss the document S/22/8 entitled “Gender Mainstreaming at IOM: concrete achievements and identified gaps”. We also would like to take this occasion to share some more general reflections on the empowerment of women, which we consider very important for the effective work of IOM.

First, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to IOM for its concern about equality of each and every human person - both at the staff level and for its efforts to assist beneficiaries of its numerous programs. The Holy See is convinced that equality of men and women, and therefore the equality of their fundamental human rights, is rooted in the inviolable dignity of the human person.

At the same time, this essential principle of equality also stands as the foundation for properly understanding the beauty of complementarity and the reciprocal interdependence between men and women. A focus on “gender equality”, that is, the equality of the two sexes, men and women, should not inhibit, in any way, the understanding and recognition of their uniqueness and mutual enrichment.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the view of this Delegation, IOM’s approach in the legitimate quest for “gender equality” should promote the specific talents of man and woman and build on their complementarity rooted in equality. In this way, the Organization can succeed in overcoming discrimination and in creating a harmonious and respectful working environment. In so doing, IOM also can prevent any risk of obfuscating the differences between men and women and in supporting their “complementarity in equality”.

Equality is not sameness, and difference is not inequality. Without the recognition of the difference and the fruitful interdependence on an equal level between men and women, the pursuit of equality would rest on weak foundations, with the risk of endangering the richness and uniqueness of the human person. As Pope Francis said, “There is no doubt that we must do far more to advance women, if we want to give more strength to the reciprocity

between man and woman. In fact, it is necessary that woman not only be listened to more, but that her voice carry real weight, a recognized authority in society.”¹

The Holy See recognizes the progress already made in the authentic advancement of women. While there is still much to be done, we welcome the positive increase registered in the representation of women at higher levels of responsibility within the Organization and commend IOM’s policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, as stated in IOM Standards of Conduct.

Mr. Chairperson,

In the view of this Delegation, achieving “gender equality” means addressing discriminatory practices, such as those that exclude women from decision-making processes; it also includes equal pay for equal work and equality of spouses in family rights. Thus, women who choose to be mothers should be protected and not disadvantaged in their careers. Fairness in career advancement necessarily requires the promotion of flexible and creative policies that balance a woman’s wish to work and to raise children, as well as an adequate balance between work and family life both for men and women.

In this regard, it is important that, when devising strategies to achieve “gender equality”, IOM accord due recognition to the role and the importance of the family, the natural and fundamental unit of human society, founded upon marriage between a man and a woman.

In conclusion, the Holy See Delegation remains optimistic that the IOM will continue on this onward journey towards the achievement of a true and authentic equality between women and men, both in the workplace and in its treatment of beneficiaries. Thus, the Organization can avoid other aims that might create confusion and distract from achieving this equality. In this regard, with reference to “gender”, the Holy See understands the term “gender” as grounded in biological sexual identity, male or female ... The Holy See thus excludes dubious interpretations based on world views which assert that sexual identity can be adapted indefinitely to suit new and different purposes.”²

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson!

¹ Pope Francis, General Audience, 15 April 2015.

² Cf. Holy See’s Final Statement, specifically, Chapter V, para. 12, p. 162 of the Report of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women:
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/Beijing%20full%20report%20E.pdf>