



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 Interactive Dialogue on Water and Sanitation – Item 3
39th Session of the Human Rights Council

10 September 2018

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See welcomes the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation and appreciates its particular focus on the issue of human rights to water and sanitation of forcibly displaced persons, in particular, of internally displaced persons, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

Recognizing the centrality of the human person, the human right to water calls for a fair distribution of and access to water resources, thus appreciating it not only as a social and cultural good, but also as an economic commodity. This however, must avoid treating water merely as a commodity that takes precedence over the human right to water. As Pope Francis most recently noted: “Today, more than ever, we need to look beyond immediate concerns (cf. *Laudato Si'*, 36) and beyond a purely utilitarian view of reality, “in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit” (ibid, 159). We urgently need shared projects and concrete gestures that recognize that every privatization of the natural good of water, at the expense of the human right to have access to this good, is unacceptable”¹.

In this regard, my Delegation shares the concern of the Special Rapporteur on the application of the framework of the human rights to water and sanitation “at all times: before, during and after emergency situations, during development projects, and in other situations that may lead to forced displacement”².

The phenomena of global interconnection and interdependency highlight how no individual State can cope with all present and future challenges we have to face, from migration to climate change. In this regard, it must be stressed that water is a precious resource to which every human being has a basic and inalienable right, as well as a responsibility not to waste. Thus, it is wise for there to be an integration of migration issues in the consideration of any water governance framework and, reciprocally, a consideration of water management issues within any migration governance framework.

¹ Pope Francis, Message for the world day of prayer for the care of creation, 1 September 2018.

² Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation. A/HRC/39/55 p.7.

Mr. President,

To ensure water security for all, global water governance needs to consider the two megatrends of this century: migration and climate change. It needs to recognize the benefits of migration for development and its life-saving purpose. Although migration in itself cannot solve water availability issues, it can be part of the solution. Taking concrete policy steps today will result in being better prepared for the future.

To this end, I would like to recall the appeal of Pope Francis that “all those engaged in the noble service of politics that the more sensitive questions of our day, such as those linked to movements of migration, climate change and the right of everyone to enjoy primary goods, may be faced with generous and farsighted responsibility and in a spirit of cooperation, especially among those countries most able to help”³.

Thank you, Mr. President.

³ Pope Francis, Message for the world day of prayer for the care of creation, 1 September 2018.