



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the UN and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 2 Oral update by the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea
26 February 2020

Madam President,

My Delegation wishes to express its concern for the seizure of the health care and educational centres of the Catholic Church, now in the hands of the governmental institutions in Eritrea, respectively, since last June and September.

The Holy See reiterates that the Catholic Church, in accord with its own nature and universal mission, carries out charitable and social activities for the whole population, with a special attention to the most in need, without discrimination. Indeed, it pursues humanitarian and not political aims, seeking to offer its own contribution to the promotion of justice, peace, reconciliation and dialogue.

We, therefore, encourage the Eritrean Government to enter into a constructive and respectful dialogue with the Holy See, in view of building a prosperous and peaceful future, where the rights of freedom of religion or belief are respected in the context of international law, for the integral development of all.

My Delegation hopes that the Catholic Church in Eritrea will enjoy the freedom to serve the common good through its health care and educational institutions, with the conviction that the only aspiration of the Catholic community in Eritrea is, along “with all the others, [...] to contribute to the good and the prosperity of the country”¹.

Thank you, Madam President.

¹ Pope Francis. Address to the Community of the Pontifical Ethiopian College in the Vatican, Clementine Hall, 11 January 2020.