



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the 17th Session of the Human Rights Council – Item 5
Geneva, 6 June 2011

Mr. President,

At the outset, my Delegation would like to congratulate all the stakeholders that engaged in the preparation of the draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to provide a communication procedure (OPC), which will become a significant instrument of the human rights system.

Beyond the legal aspect, the Optional Protocol to the CRC provides a word of hope and encouragement to those children and young people whose innocence and human dignity have been wounded by the cruelty that can be present in the world of adults. If all States, UN agencies, civil society and faith-based institutions work together in a more effective partnership, they will be able to ensure love, care and assistance to those affected by violence and abuse. Moreover, they will foster a world where these children can pursue their dreams and aspirations of a future free of violence.

“The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration”¹ and the precondition to realize the future thus envisioned. In fact, we are “convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members, and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community”². In line with the CRC that recognizes the family as essential, the Holy See believes that the best interests of the child are primarily served in the context of the traditional family.

Mr. President,

More than fifty years ago, in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, the General Assembly proclaimed that “The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal

¹ GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Art.3 al. 1 of the Convention on the Right of the Child*, 1989, p. 1.

² GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Preamble of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1989, p. 1.

manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity”³. This continues to be of great importance now, as it was then, and points to the responsibility of the entire international community to pursue its essential work of promoting the dignity and wellbeing of all children and adolescents everywhere. In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI made an appeal to the international community to increase its effort to offer an adequate response to the tragic problems experienced by far too many children: “May a generous commitment on everyone’s part not to be lacking so that the rights of children may be recognized and their dignity given ever greater respect.”

Mr. President, the Holy See looks at this new *Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child to provide a communication procedure* as an opportune contribution to strengthening the human rights system. May it also bring us closer to our ultimate goal: the unconditional preservation and respect of the dignity of every single person, woman or man, adult or child.

Thank you, Mr. President.

³ GENERAL ASSEMBLY, *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*, 1959, p. 1.