Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important topic. The Holy See Delegation understands the serious risks incurred by young women and men when they are influenced or, worse yet, forced to contract marriage before they have developed the physical and affective maturity to make and keep a permanent and mutually faithful commitment as husband and wife.

The report prepared by the Secretariat already points out the necessity to influence family and community norms related to delay of marriage among young people, to the retention of girls in school, especially at primary and secondary levels, and to the encouragement of men and boys to call into question prevailing norms and stereotypes that can be harmful to women, girls, families, and communities.

Our delegation wishes to register its serious concern, however, with regard to the recommendations in the Secretariat report that promote access to so-called “emergency contraceptives” and to so-called “safe abortion care”. Re-affirming that human life begins at the moment of conception and that life must be defended and protected, the Holy See can never condone abortion or policies that favour abortion.¹

Mr. Chairman, our delegation “…does not consider abortion or abortion services to be a dimension of reproductive health or reproductive health services … [nor does it] endorse any form of legislation which gives legal recognition to abortion,”² which is the very antithesis of human rights.