



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 23rd Session of the Human Rights Council Item 5: Report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Peace
Geneva, 7 June 2013

Mr. President,

Peace, being one of the deepest desires of the human heart, is a right that everyone should enjoy and a situation that makes the integral human development. Peace is the condition that makes all other rights possible. The realization of the fundamental rights eventually leads to a true peace based on freedom, justice and brotherhood. The UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and several other international instruments, express in a virtuous dialectic this deep and necessary link between peace and human rights. Consequently, the threat of war should be eliminated, and rightfully the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights states: "All peoples shall have the right to national and international peace and security" (n.23,1).

Defining peace by the absence of war would mean reducing it to a negative value. Peace is built day by day within the family, at school and within the society. Without solid economic, political, cultural and spiritual foundations, peace is a mirage to naive minds. Those who want to base peace exclusively on strength and on the balance of power are wrong. One only has to read the history of the Twentieth Century and contemplate the reality of recent conflicts that this Council often examines. Peace cannot be imposed by the number of weapons amassed neither by how sophisticated they are nor by their cruelty. If peace had been conditioned by military power, numerous peoples would not have suffered so many wars, death, ruin and destructive hatred. Peace is another name for development. Peace is best served by the schools we build, by the health facilities we establish, and by open prospects on future for younger generations.

Mr. President,

It is a commonplace to say that our world is much interdependent than ever. But this reinforces our belief that the human family is one and that all men and all women share the same dignity. Violence, injustice and the thirst for power, within societies and among nations, merely increase the risk of wars and conflicts. Someone's peace and security cannot be ensured without peace and security of others. Our world does not

lack resources but suffers from injustice. Divisions seem increasingly deeper and the search for peace more and more elusive. The opposite of peace is more than war. It is fear. In this sense, fear is the common denominator between rich and poor, between developed and developing countries, between military powers and those who are less privileged.

Mr. President,

War is the failure of human being and of the humane. War is the illusion that we can defend or build a healthy and better society, inflicting untold suffering to others. By destroying the other, we destroy the humane. No one emerges unscathed from a conflict or from an experience of violence. Peace is less spectacular, more patient, and more respectful of the differences, more modest. Yet, only those values are able to build a truly humane society.

The establishment of an open intergovernmental working group with the task to initiate the official codification of the human right to peace was a wise decision that we hope will bear its fruits in an effective declaration, shared by all.

In the construction or restoration of peace, historical and contemporary examples teach us that non-violence, as a doctrine and as a method, was and remains the most appropriate way of mediation and reconciliation in order to renew human, social and political ties, in favor of the common good and a lasting peace.