



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 27th Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 2: On the Opening Remarks of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
Geneva, 8 September 2014

Mr. President,

As the High Commissioner Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein begins his important mandate, the Holy See Delegation would like to congratulate him in this new and challenging role and to extend to him all the best as he moves forward.

The opening remarks of the High Commissioner underscore the wide array of ongoing human rights abuses, especially in those areas of civil and political conflict where violence has caused the killing of thousands of innocent people and displaced numerous others. Indeed, as the High Commissioner said, before such "crimes against humanity", the international community must act to remove the root causes, not merely through words, but also by "halting" these conflicts.

The High Commissioner's words clearly reveal the difficult task, and grave responsibility placed before this Human Rights Council, and all States Parties, to defend and promote all human rights for all people. My Delegation would also like to highlight, among the rights listed in the opening statement, the need to protect and defend the right to religious freedom, which is clearly under attack in some parts of the world today. This is a fundamental human right based on the right of freedom of conscience. Experience shows that when this right is respected all other rights are as well. Furthermore, the right of citizenship has not been universally applied by some States thus contributing to forced displacement and numerous abuses. There is the real risk that these people will be impeded in returning to their homes and property from which they have been forcefully eradicated, and not granted the protection and safety to live in peace in their cities and villages, as citizens with equal duties and rights.

The Holy See Delegation offers again its best wishes and support to the new High Commissioner in pursuing the high ideals of the Human Rights Council as set forth in the fundamental documents of the UN and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Thank you, Mr. President.