



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer  
of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva  
at the 32nd Session of the Human Rights Council  
Geneva, 16 June 2016

Mr. President,

The Holy See welcomes this Panel discussion on “*Women’s rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: delivery on the promise to leave no one behind.*” Indeed, the 2030 Agenda gives clear indication of comprehensive global agreement that Sustainable Development cannot be achieved without protecting and caring for every man and woman in need, and adopting an approach aimed at ensuring that “no one will be left behind”. However, despite renewed emphasis in the 2030 Agenda on the innate dignity of the human person and on the unity of the human family, many women around the world continue today to suffer from violation of their fundamental human rights.

Mr. President.

In order to achieve sustainable development, we must overcome discrimination. In particular, violence against women is an atrocious manifestation of widespread discrimination and inequality against women and girls. It prevents millions of women from fulfilling their critical role in society. As underscored in the Sustainable Development Goals, addressing this problem is fundamental to creating “a peaceful and equitable future.”<sup>1</sup> The Holy See Delegation believes that elimination of violence requires a specific and concerted commitment by both governments and civil society. As regards the latter, the Catholic Church, through its associations and commitment, in both cities and rural communities, has been a pioneer in assisting and helping women victims of violence and in providing them with secure shelter, as well as psychological and social support.

My Delegation would like to recall that current levels of domestic violence against women and girls reflect a most alarming prevalence. As Pope Francis stated in *Amoris Laetitia*: “*The verbal, physical and sexual violence that women endure in some marriages contradicts the very nature of the conjugal union.*”<sup>2</sup> Such shameful behaviour hinders women

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on the activities of the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, 15 December 2015, p.16 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N15/431/06/PDF/N1543106.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris laetitia*, 54, p. 43.

from bringing out their best and unique qualities, which are so useful and necessary to make society progress in the right direction. In this regard, the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a fresh opportunity to reflect on the pivotal role of genuine and strong family bonds, as the family is the key starting point for a better society.

Mr. President,

Collaboration with and respect for women are fundamental in building a society based on real values, including those related to religious convictions. In this respect, education represents one of the most important determining factors for the promotion of women in society; it empowers them to become protagonists in efforts to overcome inequality and violence and to bring their unique and effective contributions to the creation of a more just and equitable human family. In this regard, we note the significant resource offered by 400,000 Catholic Church-sponsored elementary and secondary schools in all parts of the world. Many of these are located in developing countries. These Catholic Church-sponsored educational institutions are particularly attentive also to make education accessible to girls and young women, especially those who come from underprivileged or marginalized families and communities.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, disregard of the equal dignity of human beings constitutes one of the most urgent challenges to the international community. We are all well aware of the specific and distinctive influence of women in society, whose input and leadership can be crucial to the search for solutions to the many global problems facing humanity, from poverty to climate change. Women have a specific vocation in the human society and they must be encouraged to embrace the opportunity to uphold the dignity of life through their involvement in education and their participation in political and civic life. They can and should develop their unique “capacity for the other” for, without their voice, the social fabric of society would be weakened.

Thank you, Mr. President.