



**“3rd Dialogue on Faith, Peacebuilding & Development:
Advancing Peace through Interfaith Harmony”**

Intervention by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva

9 February 2018

Thank you, Mr. Moderator

first of all, let me express my gratitude to you and the conveners of this important initiative, as well as the other panelists. I would also like to reiterate the Holy See’s appreciation for the leadership of the Kingdom of Jordan in promoting interreligious dialogue and peaceful coexistence between the faithful of different religions.

The concern that it bears for each person and for the whole of humanity is the only interest that the Holy See defends in the framework of its diplomatic action and on the international scene. It has no commercial or military interests to defend or to pursue, but serves rather the interests of the person, of every person. This way it places itself at the service of the Common Good of the whole human family, reminding that our differences are not an obstacle to dialogue, but rather a vital source of encouragement in our common desire to know the Truth. Indeed, what we are is a gift from God, but what we become is our gift to God, and the more we grow in the love of God, the more we grow in the love of our neighbor and vice versa.

Today, I would like to elaborate briefly on three concrete examples which can illustrate the activities of the Holy See in advancing peace and development through dialogue:

1. First, migrants and refugees. While it is important to respect the legitimate interests of States, Pope Francis encourages that migration be regarded with confidence, as an opportunity to build peace and not as a threat, "within the limits allowed by a correct understanding of the common good"¹. Migrants represent the human face of globalization. They can serve as instruments of peaceful relations among countries thus demonstrating the truth that we are on human family. In spite of the different motivations and causes, all migrants and refugees generally have in common a factor that underlies the decision to abandon their homeland and often their family and friends, that is, sheer necessity. Indeed, migrants "desire a better life, and not infrequently try to leave behind the 'hopelessness' of an unpromising future."²

In this regard, Pope Francis appealed to the political community, civil society, and religious institutions to join forces in offering a shared response to the complexities of the modern migration phenomenon³. This is summarized in a document that the Holy See has submitted as an official contribution to the processes leading to the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration⁴ with four verbs: to welcome, to protect, to promote, to integrate.

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, Message for the celebration of the 51st World Day of Peace, 1 January 2018.

² *Ibid.*

³ Cf. Pope Francis, Address to the International Forum on Migration and Peace, 21 February 2017.

⁴ Cf. “*Responding to Refugees and Migrants: Twenty Action Points*”. See also Document UN A/72/528.

2. Second, the quest for Peace and disarmament. The desire for peace dwells deep in the human heart of all people, belonging to the single human family. Peace is our common goal. But it is also the necessary condition for the construction of fraternal societies, just and respectful of the human dignity shared by all. Yet, free to choose peace or violence, humans throughout history have often succumbed to the temptation of power and the search for a world order imposed by the force of arms. This illusion has cost too much in the past and continues to be the tragedy of our current world. The figures of military expenditures alone show the extent of this illusion. The world spent one thousand seven hundred billion dollars last year on military purposes. This huge sum, to compare with the modest amount allocated to the humanitarian aid, could have been enough to ensure that nations could live in peace and dignity.

Regrettably, there is an evident and deep chasm that separates commitments from actions in the field of disarmament and arms control. While everyone condemns the grave effects of arms proliferation, the search for economic profit still dominates over any humanitarian concern. As Pope Francis observed: “We say the words ‘No more war!’ but at the same time we manufacture weapons and sell them... to those who are at war with one another.”⁵ This sadly reminds me of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in the Scottish writer Robert Stevenson’s novel. Some States are trying to play the role of Dr. Jekyll, the good guy, by promoting noble principles, while in reality they represent Mr. Hyde, the evil guy, by exporting weapons and fueling crisis.

The Holy See encourages the international community to be resolute in promoting effective disarmament and arms control negotiations and in strengthening international humanitarian law by reaffirming the preeminent and inherent value of human dignity and the centrality of the human person. It has signed, ratified or acceded to almost all treaties and conventions relating to arms control and disarmament: starting with weapons of mass destruction, nuclear, chemical and biological, through antipersonnel mines, cluster munitions, etc.

In a landmark statement on nuclear arms in November last year, Pope Francis has categorically condemned not only the threat of their use but also their very possession. Nuclear weapons exist in the service of a mentality of fear that affects not only the parties in conflict but the entire human race. He said that weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, create nothing but a false sense of security. They cannot constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence between members of the human family, which must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity.

“Integral disarmament and integral development are intertwined. Indeed, the quest for peace as a precondition for development requires battling injustice and eliminating, in a non-violent way, the causes of discord that lead to wars. The proliferation of weapons clearly aggravates situations of conflict and entails enormous human and material costs that undermine development and the search for lasting peace. The historic result achieved last year with the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference for negotiating a legally binding instrument to ban nuclear arms, shows how lively the desire for peace continues to be among all faiths.”⁶

3. Third, human rights. The advancement of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, essential for the construction of a peaceful society and for the overall development of

⁵ Interview of Pope Francis for the Belgian Catholic weekly, “Tertio”, 7 December.2016

⁶ Address of Pope Francis to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 9 January 2018

individuals, peoples and nations, remains at the heart of the position of the Holy See in the international arena.

For the Holy See, to speak of human rights means above all to restate the centrality of the human person, willed and created by God in his image and likeness. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which in December this year will celebrate its 70th Anniversary, is “the outcome of a convergence of different religious and cultural traditions, all of them motivated by the common desire to place the human person at the heart of institutions, laws and the workings of society, and to consider the human person essential for the world of culture, religion and science.”⁷

In recent years, the interpretation of some rights has progressively changed, with the inclusion of a number of “new rights” that not infrequently conflict with one another. Any particular human rights norm must be balanced against other norms so that the protection of human rights is viewed as a coherent, indivisible ensemble not a hierarchical system where one right invariably conflict with one another. In this new, distorted interpretation, the human person is considered an end in himself or herself. Such a myopic understanding of the person and of human rights that focuses solely on the fulfillment of individual desires, suffocates the aspiration toward the other, thus encouraging a selfishness that often leads to emptiness and death.

As Pope Francis stated in his address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See last month, “somewhat paradoxically, there is a risk that, in the very name of human rights, we will see the rise of modern forms of *ideological colonization* by the stronger and the wealthier, to the detriment of the poorer and the most vulnerable.” The Pope also expressed his suffering that many fundamental rights continue to be violated today. “First among all of these is the right of every human person to life. It is not only war or violence that infringes these rights. In our day, there are more subtle means: I think primarily of innocent children discarded even before they are born, unwanted at times simply because they are ill or malformed, or as a result of the selfishness of adults. I think of the elderly, who are often cast aside, especially when infirm and viewed as a burden. I think of women who repeatedly suffer from violence and oppression, even within their own families. I think too of the victims of human trafficking, which violates the prohibition of every form of slavery.”⁸

In this regard, I am deeply convinced that interreligious dialogue and interfaith harmony can and should join forces in restoring the original value of these rights, firmly hinged on the centrality of the human person and his/her dignity derived from God. Religious differences need not be a source of division and distrust, but rather a force for unity, forgiveness, tolerance and wise nation-building. “Religion can play a significant role in repairing the emotional, spiritual and psychological wounds of those who have suffered in the years of conflict. Drawing on deeply-held values, they can help to uproot the causes of conflict, build bridges of dialogue, seek justice and be a prophetic voice for all who suffer.”⁹

I would like to conclude my intervention by stressing once again that we all belong to one human family. We achieve the Common Good with all members of the human family, not against them or some of them. In this regard, dialogue is essential if we are to know, understand and respect one another. May God bless you and your work. Thank you.

⁷ http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080418_un-visit.html

⁸ Address of Pope Francis to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, 9 January 2018.

⁹ Address of Pope Francis, Meeting with government authorities, the civil society and the diplomatic corps, *Nay Pyi Taw*, 28 November 2017)