



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the
Third Formal Consultation towards a Global Compact on Refugees
Statement 2: Meeting needs and supporting communities
Geneva, 10 April 2018

Thank you, Madam Moderator.

The Delegation of the Holy See welcomes the relevance given in the Zero Draft to the health and education of refugees, two areas where the Catholic Church through its many institutions is deeply engaged.

My Delegation wishes to highlight the critical importance of adopting policies that allow refugee children to access quality education from the early stages of their displacement, in order to help protect them from human trafficking, forced labor and other forms of slavery. Schools are a form of protection where the safety of children can be monitored and fostered.¹ For these reasons, it is important that the Draft acknowledges the need to enact policies which ensure that the primary and secondary education to which refugees have access meets the same standards of education received by citizens.

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on a more specific comment, under the subsection 2.2 on “Jobs and livelihoods” the Holy See Delegation wishes to propose an addition to the measures outlined in Paragraph 61, in order to underline the importance of outlining “national policy and laws required for safe and lawful employment, as well as for livelihood strategies, especially in ensuring safeguards against abuse and exploitation and legal protections”.

The importance of granting access to healthcare is self-explanatory. The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health should be exercised through non-discriminatory, comprehensive laws, policies and practices firmly rooted in the centrality of the human person and founded on the right to life. In this regard, under the subsection 2.3 on “Health”, in particular at Paragraph 63, rather than the proposed measure to “define and support a basic package of health services”, it would prove more effective and helpful to provide for a measure to “ensure access to basic health care”. It would be highly regrettable to impose some measures that would cause lengthy discussions on their content while ignoring the attention due to women’s dignity and the specific cultural and moral values of their country of origin.

Additionally, the Delegation of the Holy See would also like to suggest a change to the title of section 2.6 from “Gender” to “Empowerment of women and girls”, in order to make it clear that what we want to achieve is an increased participation and contribution of women and girls as stakeholders and leaders, based on the equality between women and men, and their integral development.

¹ Cf. *Responding to Refugees and Migrants: Twenty Action Points*, Migrants and Refugees Section, Holy See’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development.

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Access to education and healthcare inspires hope among refugees and greatly contributes to restoring their dignity. Notwithstanding its non-binding legal nature, the Global Compact on Refugees will have a strong morally binding character. The Delegation of the Holy See considers it important to assure that this document aims at truly improving the lives of millions of refugees who continually seek international protection and at assisting those local communities that generously host them.

The many Catholic-inspired organizations that are working in synergy alongside the UNHCR in the common objective of protection and assistance, find themselves in a privileged position to promote the true dignity of refugees, based on strict ethical guidelines. In this regard, it is important to keep an underlying holistic and integrated approach throughout the Draft, with a strong focus on the centrality of the human person and his/her dignity. The ambiguity of some of the language in the current drafting, including some references made in the footnotes to documents and to principles and guidelines that do not share international consensus may undermine the impact and effectiveness of this vital cooperation and of the GCR altogether.

Madam Moderator,

The noble goals and spirit of the 1951 Refugees Convention set after the devastating experience of World War II will only remain alive if constantly renewed and inspired by a genuine sense of solidarity and responsibility toward the needier members of the human family. We should never forget this as we work together to develop the Global Compact on Refugees.

Thank you, Madam Moderator.