



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič
Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
at the One-day Intersessional seminar on the role of the family
in supporting the protection and promotion of human rights of older persons
Panel 4: “Towards greater protection of the family and human rights of older persons”
Geneva, 11 June 2018

Mr. Chair,

As stated in the Madrid Political Declaration, we “need to strengthen solidarity among generations [...] and to encourage mutually responsive relationships between” older and younger persons¹. This is the unique and irreplaceable role of the family, where the “loving care of all [its] members - from toddlers to seniors”² is experienced.

What older persons can give to and receive from the family environment is at the core of the life of a thriving society where human rights are cherished. Moreover, as the natural and fundamental unit of society, the family is entitled to protection by society and the State³.

All too often, however, we see that the very anthropological basis of the family, its constitution based on the mutual “free and full”⁴ commitment of a man and a woman, its intergenerational dynamics and its finality to generate, nurture and cherish life, is constantly threatened, if not outright denied.

With no evidence either in nature or in history, notwithstanding the differences in family life due to each social context, novel ideologies promote an idea of family that is based upon the assumption that family is not built on human reason and love, but on psychological needs, “as a form of mere emotional satisfaction that can be constructed in any way or modified at will.”⁵

A society based solely upon needs, however, will inevitably turn into an egoistic society, which is certainly not the environment where life is welcomed and protected, especially when weak and in need of assistance, like in advanced ages.

Mr. Chair,

The Holy See regards the family as a community of persons, as the fundamental cell of society, where the principle of solidarity is lived on a daily basis. Therefore, in order to uphold the human rights of individuals, the family’s own identity must, in like manner, be protected.

The family after all is, in many ways, the first school of how to be human and the center and the heart of a “civilization of love”.⁶

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

¹ Second World Assembly on Ageing, Madrid, Spain, 8-12 April 2002, Political Declaration, Article 16.

² Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, *Amoris Laetitia*, n. 88.

³ Cfr. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16,3.

⁴ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16,2.

⁵ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 66.

⁶ Pope Paul VI, Message for the World Day of Peace, 1 January 1977.