



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 39th Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 3 – Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development

Geneva, 12 September 2018

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See wishes to thank the Special Rapporteur for his report on the Right to development¹.

It is indeed a compelling duty for each and every member of the international community, and its institutions to pursue the goal designed by the 2030 Agenda that no one be left behind in the enjoyment of the fruits of “economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized”.²

The human person with his/her inherent rights and religious and social duties is both the foundation of an integral development and the first agent in establishing the policies that lead to it.³

Mr. President,

The concept of the “inherent dignity of the human person” will remain merely an empty slogan if it does not translate into inclusive, human rights-centred development policies that are able to reach all segments of society, especially those marginalized and most in need.

In this context, my Delegation agrees with the Report when it calls to take advantage of modern tools of social and economic analysis in order to uncover the root causes of inequality and discrimination that could hamper the common efforts toward this goal.⁴

The inclusiveness of this process entails the legal prohibition and elimination of every form of discrimination on the grounds indicated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.⁵

At the same time, it is worth noticing that human rights “must be respected as an expression of justice, and not merely because they are enforceable through the will of the legislators”, and that “legality often prevails over justice when the insistence upon rights makes them appear as the exclusive result of legislative enactments or normative decisions taken by the various agencies of those in power”.⁶

¹ A/HRC/39/51.

² Declaration on the Right to Development, A/RES/41/128, Art.1, 1.

³ Ibid., Art.2,2.

⁴ Cfr A/HRC/39/51, 62-64.

⁵ A/HRC/39/51, n.8.

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation, 18 April 2008.

The Holy See reiterates its concern about “debatable notions of human rights”, which are promoted in many multilateral settings, which “are at odds with the culture of many countries.” A modern form of “ideological colonization”⁷ is in this way endangering the cooperation among nations rather than fostering peace and a true development.

On the contrary, only when human rights are based on natural law, inscribed on the human heart and present in different cultures and civilisations,⁸ may their promotion become “the most effective strategy for eliminating inequalities between countries and social groups, and for increasing security”.⁹

Mr. President,

“Integral human development and the full exercise of human dignity cannot be imposed.”¹⁰ Disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups must be enabled to participate in decision-making mechanisms¹¹ as dignified agents of their own destiny.

This participatory approach¹² will be successful only if it respects the principle of subsidiarity. States and multilateral agencies must reach out to all segments of society, in a “right relationship with all those areas in which human social life develops – friends, communities, towns and cities, schools, business and unions, provinces and nations”.¹³

The local communities, educational centres and other services, in which the Catholic Church is active, constitute an important arena, which enhances participatory processes in order to build resilient communities and foster social and economic development.

Mr. President,

Allow me to conclude, by quoting Pope Francis, who reaffirmed: “...the simplest and best measure and indicator of the implementation of the new *Agenda* for development will be effective, practical and immediate access, on the part of all, to essential material and spiritual goods: housing, dignified and properly remunerated employment, adequate food and drinking water; religious freedom and, more generally, spiritual freedom and education. These pillars of integral human development have in common foundation, which is the right to life and, more generally, what we could call the right to existence of human nature itself.”¹⁴

Thank you, Mr. President.

⁷ Pope Francis, Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the traditional exchange of new year, 8 January 2018.

⁸ Cfr. Pope Benedict XVI, Meeting with the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Pope Francis, Meeting with the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation, 25 September 2015.

¹¹ Cfr. A/HRC/39/51, 66.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Pope Francis, Meeting with the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation, 25 September 2015.

¹⁴ Pope Francis, Meeting with the Members of the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation, 25 September 2015.