



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
Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
ITEM 3 – General Debate

Geneva, 14 September 2018

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the report and commends the High Commissioner's call for young people to enjoy all human rights. Indeed, this generation is vulnerable to becoming isolated and to lose their sense of belonging "to a family, to a homeland, to a culture, to a faith."¹

Pope Francis, by announcing a Synod on Youth for next October, expresses this concern. Young people, nowadays more than ever, "dream of safety, stability, fulfilment"² and they wish to affirm the inherent dignity of work, to participate actively in shaping their future, and that of society as a whole.

However, the world economy, although growing, is not able to create enough quality jobs for young people.³ This phenomenon occurs as much in emerging as in developed countries. Young women are the most vulnerable, often becoming victims of different forms of exploitation, unjust working conditions and inadequate levels of remuneration.

The unemployed youth tend to become demoralized, to lose hope and confidence in their abilities and find themselves trapped in a spiral of social exclusion with a risk of falling into violent and criminal activities. This has long-lasting negative effects on their personality, their professional prospects, and their adult choices.

The current world instability is also a push factor for dramatic youth migration flows to escape poverty, conflicts, or the effects of climate change.

¹ Pope Francis, Meeting with the journalists during the flight to Brazil, 22 July 2013.

² Pope Francis, "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment" – Pre-synodal Meeting, final document, Rome, March 2018.

³ More than one third of the total unemployment rate is covered by young people (approximately 71 million) – information extracted from the Global Employment Trends for Youth 2017, International Labour Organization (ILO).

It is necessary to rebuild and re-adapt the links between education and work where technological progress and globalization are reshaping the labour market. Therefore, the building of cognitive skills, as well as social and emotional, practical and physical skills, the sharing of values, will all be essential ingredients of any education. Indeed, education implies accompanying young people as they become protagonists of their own lives and responsible parties in the lives of others.

In parallel, the political voice of youth is not as strong as it should be. In developed countries, young people are often outnumbered by an aging population. In developing countries, youth are numerous but political participation is often constrained. In order to build an inclusive future, we need to place young people at the centre of our attention and consider them as valuable resources rather than a liability.

We should not forget that “the young are a gift to be cherished and encouraged, an investment that will yield a rich return if only they are given real opportunities... This is an urgent requirement of intergenerational justice ..., [that] demands that future generations inherit a natural environment unspoilt by human greed and depredation. It is essential that our young not be robbed of hope and of the chance to employ their idealism and talents in shaping the future of their country and, indeed, our entire human family.”⁴

Thank you, Mr. President.

⁴ Pope Francis, Meeting with Government authorities, the civil society and the Diplomatic Corps, Myanmar, 28 November 2017.