



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 144<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Executive Board of the World Health Organization  
Agenda Item: 5.5 – “Universal Health Coverage”  
28 January 2019

Madame Chairperson,

The Holy See recognizes the key role of the World Health Organization, together with UNICEF and the Government of Kazakhstan, in convening the Global Conference on Primary Health Care: From Alma-Ata towards universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals, held in October 2018. My delegation noted, with much interest, the call, issued in the Declaration of Astana, for a renewal of primary health care, which, four decades ago, also was emphasized with great urgency by the Declaration of Alma-Ata.

The Holy See affirms the call to mobilize all stakeholders to take joint action to build stronger and sustainable primary health care towards achieving universal health coverage. Since the contribution of faith-based organizations was specifically mentioned in the Declaration of Astana, my delegation wishes to inform the Executive Board that, during 2018, Catholic-inspired organizations provided health care at 5,287 hospitals and 15,397 dispensaries, 15,722 residential programs for the elderly and for persons living with debilitating chronic illnesses and other disabilities, in all parts of the world. The majority of these health-related programmes provide integrated, person-centered, and primary care to all persons in need, but with special commitment those who are most poor and marginalized. Such care is rendered with due recognition to the sacredness of human life, from conception to natural death, and reaches to the grassroots level in local communities, in an effort, as is referenced in the Report by the Director General for this agenda item, to achieve “healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages.”

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I wish to share with the Executive Board the words of Pope Francis, communicated through his Secretary of State, to the WHO Director-General, in conjunction with the 2018 observance of International Universal Health Coverage Day. In his message, Pope Francis affirmed “the right of all to have access to healthcare as a means of fostering the value of justice and the common good, which at the same time is the good of all and of everyone in particular.”

Thank you, Madame Chairperson.