



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Observer of the Holy See  
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva  
Statement of the Holy See after the adoption of the Resolution “Strengthening of the  
Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations”  
at the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment  
*Geneva, 26 June 2019*

Distinguished Vice President,

My Delegation would like to thank the Co-facilitators, the representatives of Switzerland and Indonesia, for their leadership and efforts during this year of negotiations on the draft resolution entitled “Strengthening of the Coordination of Emergency Humanitarian Assistance of the United Nations”. We also would like to express our appreciation to OCHA and ICRC for their assistance and expertise offered throughout the negotiations.

Mr. Vice President,

The Holy See, according to its nature, has always raised its voice in defense of the dignity and fundamental rights of those who are experiencing humanitarian emergencies, especially with respect to, among many other things: providing physical protection, working with police and border control agents, facilitating access to justice and humanitarian aid, as well as housing, emergency health care, and education through local efforts and mediating tensions with host communities.

In this regard, my Delegation welcomes the inclusion in this resolution of stronger language on the prevention of, and responses to, natural disasters following the spirit of the Sendai framework.

Progress was also made with regard to the protection of civilian objects and sites, especially places where civilians should feel safe but instead are used as targets, especially schools, hospitals and places of worship. The right to education and the provision of quality education in the context of humanitarian emergencies has been adequately reflected in the text as well as the efforts to protect the most vulnerable, particularly women, children, the elderly and disabled.

My Delegation also welcomes stronger language on child protection, as it urges to take action to prevent, respond and investigate acts of violence against children exposed to abuses in humanitarian emergencies.

My Delegation is also glad to see some progress with regard to IDPs, which implies acceptance and recognition of the fact that we, as one human family, are interdependent. It calls us to international cooperation in favor of the poor and powerless, including migrants and refugees, as our own brothers and sisters.

In this regard, the Holy See is pleased to see that this year's resolution, which is well known for its operational nature, emphasized the importance of actions to respond to the food and nutrition needs of affected populations, taking into account women and children, especially during pregnancy and lactation, when the nutritional requirements are increased, with special attention to the first 1,000 days. This is a concrete action to respond to famine and malnutrition in the context of humanitarian emergencies and to protect women and their children from the moment of conception.

Mr. Vice President,

While affirming the intention and purpose of the resolution before us, as outlined above, my Delegation wishes to make reservations on the following concepts used therein:

1. The Holy See interprets the terms "sexual and reproductive health," "reproductive rights," and "family planning" as applying to a holistic concept of health. We do not consider abortion, access to abortion, or access to abortifacients as a dimension of these terms. We do not recognize the creation of any new rights or the promotion of radical individual autonomy in this regard, as fully laid out in our reservations registered at both the Cairo and Beijing conferences.

3. With reference to "gender", the Holy See understands the term to be grounded in biological sexual identity and difference. Regarding the concepts of "gender norms" and "gender stereotypes", the Holy See does not recognize the idea that gender is socially constructed, but that it is found in the objective identity of the human person as born male or female.

Thank you, Mr. Vice President.