



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 44th Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 3 – Report of the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity*
Geneva, 9 July 2020

Madam President,

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and international solidarity and its focus on climate change. In this difficult time of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has already changed the societies in which we live, we are called to take care of each other, not to isolate ourselves in selfishness, but to promote and defend human life, to offer adequate medical care and guarantee access to medicine for all, to fuel international solidarity, and to fight the culture of waste. The crisis we are going through once again highlights how everything is connected. In the face of the suffering of the poorest and the exploitation of our common home, the human family can no longer observe with indifference. “The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. At the global level, it is a complex system linked to many of the essential conditions for human life [...] Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day”.¹

“Interdependence obliges us to think of *one world with a common plan*”² (LS, 164). Any State, any private actor, any international organization cannot succeed by acting alone, everyone’s collaboration and commitment is fundamental. As recalled by the Independent Expert: “Protecting the global environment and addressing the local impacts of climate change through human rights-based international solidarity are, therefore, an objective necessity that can no longer be delayed”. In the same vein, Pope Francis highlighted the need of “a new and universal solidarity. (...)All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents”.³

There are two long-standing concepts of international law which recognize a unity of interests, as well as respect for differing values, rights and needs in pursuing global environmental protection, and therefore express certain dimensions of international solidarity. First, the understanding of climate change as a “common

¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, *Laudato si*, 23,25.

² *Laudato si*, 164.

³ *Laudato si*, 14.

concern of humankind” implies that the widest cooperation and positive action be taken for the benefit of present and future generations.⁴ Second, the recognition that States have “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities” is key to international cooperation. Moreover, we need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family. When addressing global issues, there should not be frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide, still less there should room for the globalization of indifference.⁵ This is clearly highlighted by the “the current Covid-19 crisis, which does not recognize borders [...] our joint fight against the pandemic brings everyone to recognize the great need to reinforce brotherly and sisterly bonds as members of a single human family”.⁶

Madam President,

The global economic crises have, among other things, made painfully obvious that we cannot ignore those who will come after us. We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. We are facing a “challenge of civilization” in favour of the common good and of a change of perspective that places this same dignity at the centre of our action, which is clearly expressed in the “human face” of climate emergencies.

As stressed by Pope Francis once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift that we have freely received and must share with others. (...) Intergenerational solidarity is not an optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received from others also belongs to those who will follow us.

Thank you, Madam President.

⁴ Report of the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, A/HRC/44/44, p.8.

⁵ *Laudato si*, 52.

⁶ Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 29 march 2020.