



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 Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children
Geneva, 3 July 2020

Madam President,

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the report and appreciates its approach which places emphasis on the victims of trafficking. Indeed, alongside the relentless prosecution of human traffickers, providing remedies to victims and assisting their reintegration in society, needs to be among the top priorities.

Yet, “human trafficking survivors tend to be overlooked, rejected, punished, or even scapegoated [...]”¹. It is crucial to establish or improve programs and mechanisms for protecting, rehabilitating and reintegrating victims of trafficking, allocating to them the economic resources seized by the traffickers.²

Madam President,

Trafficking in persons should have no place in the human family. Despite substantial progress to eradicate this scourge through various initiatives, the numbers continue to paint a grim picture for the victims. Human trafficking in its various manifestations continues to be “an open wound on the body of contemporary humanity”³, taking advantage of conflicts, poverty, corruption, lack of education and opportunities as well as, in the last few months, of the emergency situations exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Human trafficking is a scourge in our societies because it denies the very dignity of the victim, treating her or him only as a commodity to be traded and exploited for profit, in one of the more dramatic examples of a “throwaway culture” which Pope Francis has repeatedly denounced. While some forms of human trafficking are well known, this Delegation also wishes to express its concern over the growing trafficking in newborn babies and in women who serve as surrogate mothers.

Madam President,

Since human trafficking is typically led by organized criminal networks, it is only through a universal concerted approach that we will succeed in eradicating this crime for good. As these criminal networks operate both within and across borders, ensnaring children, women and men around the globe,

¹ Migrant and Refugee Section, Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development of the Holy See, “Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking”, available at: <https://migrants-refugees.va/documents/en/email/pastoral-orientations-on-human-trafficking.pdf>

² *Ibid.*

³ Pope Francis, Address to the participants in the International Conference on Human Trafficking: a wound on the body of contemporary humanity, 11 April 2019.

it is important to continue to form “coalitions of good will” and to lead by example. We owe this to past and present victims so as to avoid more victims in the future.

In this regard, the Holy See Delegation wishes to bring to light the tireless work of faith-based organizations, which is often risky and replete with challenges. Indeed, faith-based organizations, active at the community level, have long been on the frontlines to fight human trafficking, representing a beacon of hope for many. Faith-based organizations dedicate their work to prevention, rescue and rehabilitation of victims, by assisting them in their gradual reintegration into society and by providing psychological and spiritual assistance.

Madam President,

To conclude, while much attention is rightly paid to law-enforcement and the prosecution of traffickers, which provide the supply side of human trafficking, it is equally important to raise awareness about the demand side. If men, women and children are trafficked, this is ultimately because there is a great demand that makes their exploitation profitable. Those who generate such a demand, as well as those who support them, also share real responsibility in these deplorable criminal enterprises.

Thank you, Madam President.