



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 45th Session of the Human Rights Council, Agenda Item 3
Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Water and Sanitation

Geneva, 16 September 2020

Madam President

This year marks the 10th anniversary since the UN General Assembly explicitly recognized the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right. Since that critical time, it has been often reiterated that «water is the most essential element for life, and the future of humanity depends on our capacity to guard it and share it»¹.

Even though with the adoption of the SDGs in 2015 the UN General Assembly recognized «the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation as components of the right to an adequate standard of living are essential for the full enjoyment of the right to life and all human rights»², the Holy See has continually emphasized that more still needs to be done to foster the universal affirmation of this fundamental right.

In this, my Delegation wishes to underscore that «the full realization of the human rights to water and sanitation cannot be left to States alone»³. Rather, it is the responsibility of all to develop our societies in a more integral and sustainable way. Access to water and sanitation is not just a basic human need, but also a crucial element for the health of the Earth and of those who live it.

Furthermore, the Holy See welcomes the Special Rapporteur's underlining of the importance of the many types of resources that contribute to achieving the rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. However, we cannot forget that «the right to water, as all human rights, finds its basis in human dignity and not in any kind of merely quantitative assessment that considers water as a merely economic good»⁴. The international community has to face the urgent moral need for new solidarity concerning natural resources. Water management must be based on social

¹ Pope Francis, *'Water' the most essential element for life*, 22 March 2018,

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-03/pope-francis-world-water-day.html>

² United Nations – General Assembly, *The human right to safe drinking water and sanitation*, Resolution A/RES/70/169, 17 December 2015, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/169

³ <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/45/10>, p.19.

⁴ Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, #485,

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.htm

responsibility, a mentality of ecological behavior and solidarity among countries and globally, as the only possibility to strengthen the common good and preserve it for future generations.

Madam President,

We are dealing with an unprecedented crisis which is showing us that «this is not a time for self-centredness, because the challenge we are facing is shared by all, without distinguishing between persons. [...] Let us not lose the opportunity to give further proof of solidarity, also by turning to innovative solutions»⁵.

Thank you.

⁵ Pope Francis, Urbi et Orbi message, 12 April 2020,
http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/urbi/documents/papa-francesco_20200412_urbi-et-orbi-pasqua.html