



Intervention by Msgr. John Putzer, Chargé d’Affaires, a.i.
Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other
International Organizations in Geneva
at the Interactive Dialogue on Water and Sanitation – Item 3
48th Session of the Human Rights Council
Geneva, 15 September 2021

Madame President,

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation which raises awareness of the gravity of the global water crisis that humanity is facing and which is aggravated by the financialization of water, climate change and the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

Universal access to drinking water is central to promoting the dignity of the human person and has always been a priority for the Holy See. As Pope Francis has repeatedly stated, “access to safe drinkable water is a basic and universal human right, since it is essential to human survival and, as such, is a condition for the exercise of other human rights. Our world has a grave social debt towards the poor who lack access to drinking water, because they are denied the right to a life consistent with their inalienable dignity.”¹

Unfortunately, even in our age of progress and technological advances, “access to safe, drinkable water is not within everyone's reach.”² This water gap is further aggravated by the harmful effects of climate change and the current health crisis which “has widened existing social and economic inequalities, highlighting the damage caused by the absence or inefficiency of water services among those most in need.”³

The Covid pandemic has also underscored how interconnected the global community is. In a spirit of fraternity, universal access to clean water and sanitation is not only an urgent priority, given the need to reduce the risks of global health emergencies, but it is also a grave responsibility shared by all, so that each and every one of our brothers and sisters may enjoy a dignified life. Concerted and coordinated effort on the part of all stakeholders is therefore essential for ensuring that all people have access to clean and adequate water.

Madame President,

Water is not a commodity; it is a universal symbol and source of life and health. It is therefore necessary to ensure drinking water and hygienic services for all. ⁴

Thank you, Madame president

¹ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, n. 30.

² Video message sent by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, on behalf of Pope Francis, to participants at a webinar organized by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on the occasion of the 2021 World Water Day.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Cf. Pope Francis, Angelus, Library of the Apostolic Palace, 21 March 2021.