



Statement by Msgr. John Putzer, Chargé d'affaires, a.i.  
of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See  
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva  
to the Second Special Session of the World Health Assembly  
30 November 2021  
*Geneva*

Mr. President,

The decision of the 74<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly to hold a Special Session on Pandemic Preparedness and Response is a clear sign of the recognition by Member States that global health emergencies cannot be addressed in a piece-meal fashion but rather must encompass a coordinated response that involves the local, national, regional and global levels.

As members of one human family, the whole of society has the duty to respect the dignity of each and every person. In the context of the ongoing pandemic, this implies not only the responsibility of Governments to adopt the necessary measures, in conformity with the most reliable scientific data, but it also demands that each and every member of society act responsibly in order to protect one's health and that of others. Along those lines, Pope Francis has affirmed that receiving medically approved vaccinations is a concrete act of love towards our neighbor that contributes directly to the common good<sup>1</sup>.

Mr. President,

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated how access to universal basic healthcare is a condition *sine qua non* for the integral development of all human persons. It has also provided evidence of the collective moral imperative for the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pope Francis, Video Message of the Holy Father to the people on the vaccination campaign against COVID-19.

international community to commit itself even further to ensure the provision and sharing of adequate resources, information and technologies, so as to achieve “health for all”, especially in places where distribution of countermeasures, including approved vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, have remained scarce, inequitable and untimely, and where health systems are still weak.

Mr. President,

The decisions that will be taken at this Special Session of the World Health Assembly will have a decisive impact on how the international community responds to such urgent challenges. The Holy See considers that there would be a benefit to developing a new international instrument to complement the strengthening of existing instruments and mechanisms, only inasmuch as it has a strong focus on solidarity and support capacities, especially towards low- and middle-income countries.

In this context, it seems appropriate to recall Pope Francis’ inspiring words: *“I am thinking of what comes after; of the future and of the social and economic consequences. The future has a memory. I ask you to prepare the future [...] with science and imagination to rise above the challenge in front of us”*<sup>2</sup>.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, Audience with the Vatican COVID-19 Commission, Feb. 2020.