



**Statement of the Permanent Mission of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organisations in Geneva
at the 49th Session of the Human Rights Council**

Annual Discussion on the Rights of the Child (res. 7/29 and 45/30)
Geneva, 9 March 2022

Mister President,

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the report of the High Commissioner on the rights of the child and commends its special focus on the topic of family reunification, which gives us the opportunity to reflect on a number of issues, including children's separation from their families including during humanitarian emergency.

In this regard, while keeping in mind other grave situations, we are deeply concerned by the escalation of the war in Ukraine, posing an immediate and ever-growing threat to the lives and well-being of at least 7.5 million children, many of whom have already left their homes and even their homeland.

The international community has the moral responsibility to provide assistance to families and children forced to flee, both in the short-term - with shelters, food and clean water – and in the long-term – with specific initiatives to welcome, protect, promote and integrate them. It is absolutely crucial that we support refugees fleeing from conflict zones, including by simplifying the procedures for family reunification, so that all those who have family members in other countries can easily and safely join them in a timely manner, while protecting those unaccompanied minors from being preys of abusers or traffickers.

Mister President,

When considering and implementing aspects of family reunification, the best interests of the child must be the point of departure. It is imperative to provide children, including unaccompanied minors, with child-friendly communication and appropriate treatment, which take into account their age and their specific needs.

Let us remember that the separation of children from their parents and families can cause indescribable distress, as well as fear and confusion. Moreover, the rights of the person have a fundamentally social dimension, which, in the case of children, finds an innate and vital expression in the family – the natural and fundamental unit of human society. Thus, the realization of children's rights cannot be achieved unless the family and its rights are also protected.

In this regard, the Holy See would like to reiterate that “Children have a right to grow up in a family with a father and a mother capable of creating a suitable environment for the child's growth and emotional development”.¹ In the absence of parents or other family members, it is essential to provide the child with the same protection as any other child.

Thank you, Mister President.

¹ Pope Francis, Address to the participants in the international colloquium on the complementarity between man and woman 17 November 2014.