



Statement by His Excellency Fortunatus Nwachukwu,
Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
and Other International Organizations in Geneva at the
51st Session of the Human Rights Council
Item 2: General debate on the oral update by the High Commissioner

Geneva, 15 September 2022

Mister President,

The Holy See takes note of the oral update provided by the Acting High Commissioner.

In the current international scenario, the Holy See wishes to reiterate its gravest concern for the suffering caused by conflicts in many parts of the world. Those who pay the highest price are inevitably the poorest and those in vulnerable situations. As Pope Francis recently recalled, ongoing conflicts place us in a “a third world war being fought ‘piecemeal’ – perhaps we can now say that it is ‘all out’ – putting people and the planet at ever greater risk”¹ and further destabilizing the already fragile multilateral context.

As the conflict in Ukraine approaches its seventh month, tens of thousands of people have lost their lives and millions have been displaced or fled from their homes, especially women and children. At the same time, in spite of the limited progress, such as the unblocking of some of Ukraine’s grain exports, the conflict continues to have a dramatic impact on energy and food, especially in developing countries. In this appalling scenario, the Holy See reiterates its firm conviction that international order and justice must not be based on military force but on a sincere respect for the defense and promotion of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mister President,

Many other countries, beyond just Ukraine, face equally alarming situations. The reports of violations of the right to religious freedom in many parts of the world, including the destruction of places of worship and the killing or taking hostage of religious leaders, are particularly disturbing. The Holy See reiterates that the protection of religious freedom constitutes one of the most intimate and sacred fundamental human rights and must be therefore an urgent responsibility and priority for the international community.

Mister President,

The 2030 Agenda insists on “leaving no one behind.” As we look forward with great hope for the upcoming 27th Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Framework

¹ Pope Francis, Address to the Pontifical Academy of Science, 10 September 2022.

Convention on Climate Change and the second phase of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity, we must not forget that the crises of climate change and biodiversity loss that we are facing often stem from a lack of respect for our neighbor and for our shared responsibility towards our common home. While meeting with indigenous peoples, during his recent visit to Canada, Pope Francis warned against the risk of a persistent “colonizing mentality”. In particular, he said that “colonization has not ended; in many places it has been transformed, disguised and concealed. This is the case with forms of ideological colonization. In the past, the colonialist mentality disregarded the concrete life of people and imposed certain predetermined cultural models; yet today too, there are any number of forms of ideological colonization that clash with the reality of life, stifle the natural attachment of peoples to their values, and attempt to uproot their traditions, history and religious ties.”² Let us work together to fight this mentality and ensure that the right to development of the indigenous and native peoples can be as coherent and harmonious as possible with their specific identity and values.

I thank you, Mister President.

² Pope Francis, *Meeting with Civil Authorities, Representatives of Indigenous Peoples and Members of the Diplomatic Corps*, Canada 27 July 2022.