



Statement by H.E. Archbishop 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- Agenda Item 3, Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to safe drinking water and sanitation

Geneva, 14 September 2022

Mister 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 and shares the concern that the marginalization of indigenous communities hinders their access to clean water and the enjoyment of their fundamental rights.

Indeed, “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 This is all the more the case for indigenous peoples, as water is not only an essential basic good but is also fundamental to their sense of community and spiritual practices.

Mister President,

“[R]ecognizing the way in which indigenous peoples relate to and protect their territories is an indispensable measure for our conversion to an integral ecology.”² In this way, the Holy See welcomes the recommendation of the Special Rapporteur for the International community to learn from the ancestral knowledge of indigenous peoples to treat water as a common good, available to all.

This Delegation therefore urges all States to address the issue by concerted efforts, in a spirit of international solidarity, to ensure availability, accessibility and affordability of drinkable water and sanitation facilities for all.

Thank you, Mister President.

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

² Final Document of the Synod on the Amazon, *The Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for an Integral Ecology*, n.79.