



Statement by His Excellency 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
**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert
on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights of Older Persons**
Geneva, 19 September 2022

Mister President

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, which offers us the opportunity to reflect on the impact of the deprivation of liberty on older persons. The Holy See denounces all instances of criminal detention, immigration-related detention, forced caregiving arrangements and other deprivations of the liberty of elderly persons.

In this regard, the Holy See reiterates that national, regional, and international policies regarding the protection and promotion of human rights must be firmly founded on respect for the inherent dignity of every human person, with the recognition that we are all brothers and sisters, members of the one human family. In this sense, policies regarding the rights of older persons should be developed in direct collaboration with them. The Holy See is firmly convinced of the value that older persons can bring to our societies, a value which, unfortunately, is too often overlooked. In fact, as Pope Francis stated in his Message for the World Day of Peace this year, “[a]lthough technological and economic development has tended to create a divide between generations, our current crises show the urgent need for an intergenerational partnership. Young people need the wisdom and experience of the elderly, while those who are older need the support, affection, creativity, and dynamism of the young.”¹

Mister President,

In the midst of the current context of “a third world war being fought ‘piecemeal’”², learning from the wisdom of previous generations becomes all the more urgent. It is therefore essential that, rather than applying policies that deprive older persons of their liberty, States strive to foster greater intergenerational dialogue, so that “we can be firmly rooted in the present, and from here, revisit the past and look to the future”³

In his most recent Message for the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, Pope Francis shed light on the fact that “Many people are afraid of old age. They consider it a sort of disease with which any contact is best avoided. The elderly, they think, are none of their concern and should be set apart, perhaps in homes or places where they can be cared for, lest we have to deal with their problems.”⁴ This is precisely why a compassionate and more inclusive approach is crucial to overcome the predominant “throwaway culture” of society that sees older persons as a burden, especially when they are most fragile, and to protect and promote their dignity and the inalienable value of their life even in contexts of considerable hardship.

Thank you, Mister President.

¹ Pope Francis, Message for the 55th World Day of Peace, 1 January 2022.

² Pope Francis, Address to the Pontifical Academy of Science, 10 September 2022.

³ Pope Francis, Message for the 55th World Day of Peace, 1 January 2022.

⁴ Pope Francis, Message for the 2nd World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, 24 July 2022.