



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 Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Geneva, 29 September 2022

Mister President

The Delegation of the Holy See takes note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous people and its special focus on the central role of indigenous women as scientific and technical knowledge keepers.

Indigenous women are custodians of a collective accumulation of important traditional knowledge and skills related in particular to agriculture, health care and natural resource management. These skills are also transmitted to their children and grandchildren in their vital role as mothers and grandmothers, teachers and caregivers. As emphasized by Pope Francis during his recent apostolic journey to Canada, “women [...] occupy a prominent place as blessed sources not only of physical but also of spiritual life.”¹ This Delegation remains concerned that, despite progress made in certain contexts, their fundamental role continues to be hindered by racism, discrimination and violence.

Mister President,

As recently recalled by Pope Francis in the Post-Synodal Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, indigenous peoples “often witnessed helplessly the destruction of the natural surroundings that enabled them to be nourished and kept healthy, to survive and to preserve a way of life in a culture which gave them identity and meaning.”² Many have even been forced to abandon their own lands due not only to increasingly frequent extreme climate events, but also the exploitation of resources. The deprivation of the fundamental relationship between indigenous peoples and their land endangers the transmission of languages, traditional knowledge and folklore, and has often led to undignified living conditions, lack of access to education and adequate health care.

The Holy See is firmly committed to respecting indigenous cultures, including their cultural traditions, customs and languages³. Disregard for the concrete life of indigenous peoples and the imposition of certain predetermined cultural models in the form of “ideological colonization”⁴, often threatens their traditions, history and religious bonds. In response, we must work together to foster a “globalization in solidarity”⁵, respecting these diverse cultures and engaging in constructive and inclusive dialogue founded on the recognition of the inherent dignity of every human person and of the values of different peoples, rather than the violent imposition of one cultural model.

Thank you, Mister President.

¹ Pope Francis, Homily, 26th July 2022.

² Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, 10.

³ Cfr. Pope Francis, Address to Civil Authorities, Representatives of Indigenous Peoples and Members of the Diplomatic Corps, 27 July 2022.

⁴ Cfr. *Ibidem*.

⁵ Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Querida Amazonia*, 15.