



THE HOLY SEE
2016 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting
Working Session 17: Rights of the child
The right to quality care and protection
Thursday, 29 September 2016

Mr/Mme Moderator,

The protection of children remains a major concern for the Holy See. The sad reality that children continue to suffer injustice, abuse, violence and exploitation in every part of the world, also in the OSCE participating States, obliges us to renewed and greater efforts to ensure that children, the weakest among us, are kept from harm.

In fact, the situation of a vast number of the children – inside and outside the OSCE region – is far from satisfactory, due to the lack of favourable conditions for their integral development despite the existence of a specific international juridical instrument protecting their rights, an instrument that is binding on practically all members of the international community. These are conditions connected with the lack of health care, or adequate food supply, little or no possibility of receiving a minimum of academic formation or inadequate shelter. Moreover, some serious problems remain unsolved: trafficking in children, child labour, the phenomenon of “street children”, the use of children in armed conflicts, child marriage, the use of children for commerce in pornographic material, also in the use of the most modern and sophisticated instruments of social communication.

It is essential to engage in a battle, at the national and international levels, against the violations of the dignity of boys and girls caused by sexual exploitation, by paedophilia, and by every kind of violence directed against these most defenceless of human beings. These are criminal acts that must be fought effectively with adequate preventive and penal measures by the determined action of the different authorities involved.

In the end, there is no excuse for any form of violence or exploitation of children. Such crimes can never be justified, whether committed in the home, in schools, in community and sports programmes, in religious organizations and structures. Pope Francis has also highlighted that violence against children is sadly an extensive reality, that targets children from the very beginning of their lives: “it is frightful even to think there are children, victims of abortion, who will never see the light of day; children being used as soldiers, abused and killed in armed conflicts; and children being bought and sold in that terrible form of

modern slavery which is human trafficking, which is a crime against humanity.”¹

However, in order to protect the rights of children, it is necessary that the social value of childhood is publicly recognized in all participating States. As Saint John Paul II said in his *Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations* of 2 October 1979: “No country on earth, no political system can think of its own future otherwise than through the image of these new generations that will receive from their parents the manifold heritage of values, duties and aspirations of the nation to which they belong and of the whole human family.”

The role of the family in this process cannot be ignored. As recalled by the Annotated Agenda, every child has the right to be cared for by his/her own family. The Holy See believes that the family, formed by a man and a woman united in marriage, together with their children, is the original cell of social life and represents, for the international community and for the participating States, an essential element for a pacific cohabitation among peoples and for the progress of our societies.

A society that does not protect its own children, that does not provide the family with solid support, is a society that rejects its own future.

Thank you, Mr/Mme Moderator.

¹ Pope Francis, Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, January 13th, 2014.