

Holy See Address to UN Meeting on Women

"Education Is a Key to the Authentic Advancement of Women in the World"

NEW YORK, MARCH 5, 2011 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Here is the Feb. 28 statement of the Holy See delegation to the Economic and Social Council's 55th session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

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Mr. Chairman,

On the occasion of this fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), my delegation takes this opportunity to focus on the priority and review themes presently under consideration. In this regard, my delegation continues to emphasize that education is a key to the authentic advancement of women in the world. Education not only helps the woman who pursues it, but also the community to which she belongs.

In this context, each and every person has great potential. A real education unlocks that potential and forms the person so as to be properly prepared to make a concrete contribution to family life as well as that of the community and society as a whole. The principles by which educational agencies, institutions and schools operate must be firmly rooted in a profound respect for human dignity and with full respect for religious and cultural values. If this is absent, then education is no longer a means of authentic enlightenment but becomes a tool of control by those who administer it.

Values rooted in the natural law common to humanity play a key role in the proper education of the human person. This needs to be better understood and more actively promoted for the authentic advancement of women. Those who receive an education become wise members of society who can properly choose and pursue that which is good personally and communally and avoid that which is not good for the self and for others. Primary education should focus on basic skills and it must fully respect the primary role of parents regarding their children, especially in, but not limited to, the area of human sexuality.

The provision of quality primary education is especially necessary for children who live in developing countries. Studies have consistently demonstrated that basic education is a key to overcoming poverty and thus a guarantor of the sustainable development of communities and societies.

In this regard, it is important to recognize the outstanding contribution of countless consecrated women religious who are engaged especially in poverty reduction, health and education, and have been at the forefront of helping children in countries around the world, devoting special attention to those especially in developing countries. These women engage in selfless service to help such children come to a greater appreciation of their inherent worth.

Given the many technological advancements of today, it is important that children be given the education necessary to take advantage of the communications media. Equally important, they need to be educated about the inherent dangers in such technology, especially the Internet, and receive proper guidance in this regard.

Mr. Chairman,

For some time now in this Commission, emphasis has been given to the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work. In this regard, the whole labor process must be organized and adapted to respect the requirements of the person and his or her forms of life, above all life in the home, taking into account the individual's age and sex.

In many societies today women work in nearly every sector of life. However, they should be able to fulfill their tasks in accordance with their own authentic nature, without being discriminated against and without being excluded from jobs for which they are capable, with full respect for their family aspirations and for their specific role in contributing, together with men, to the common good of society.

The true advancement of women requires that labor should be structured in such a way that women do not have to pay for their advancement by abandoning what is specific to them and at the expense of the family, in which women and mothers have an irreplaceable role. As foundational instruments of the United Nations Organization rightly point out, the family, founded on the marriage between a man and woman, is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State (cf., Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 16,3; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Art. 23,1). For this reason, women who choose marriage must be supported, as should their husbands and their children. Civil legislation regarding marriage ought to protect the family which is necessary for the preservation and increase of the human community.

Mr. Chairman,

My delegation must stress that violence and unjust discrimination against girls must never be tolerated. For this reason all States must enact and enforce legislation to protect girls from all forms of violence and exploitation, from conception onwards, including abortion, especially sex-selective abortion, female infanticide, female genital mutilation, rape, domestic violence, incest, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, child prostitution and child pornography, trafficking and forced migration, forced labor, and forced marriage as well as marriage under legal age.

States must also develop, where they have not already done so, appropriate support services to assist girls who have suffered violence and unjust discrimination. A tragically high number of girls are particularly vulnerable: orphans, children living on the street, internally displaced and refugee children, children affected by trafficking and sexual and economic exploitation, children living with HIV/AIDS and children who are incarcerated without parental support.

States must address the needs of such children by implementing policies and strategies to build and strengthen governmental, community and family capacities to provide a supportive environment for such children, including by offering appropriate counseling and psychosocial support as well as by ensuring their enrollment in school and access to shelter, good nutrition and social services on an equal basis with other children.

Mr. Chairman,

Taking up the issue of human trafficking, my delegation cannot stress enough that this form of modern slavery must end and it must end now! All States have a serious responsibility to devise, enforce and strengthen effective child and youth protection to combat, eliminate and prosecute all forms of trafficking in women and children, including for sexual and economic exploitation, as part of a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy within wider efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children, taking effective measures against the criminalization of women and children who are victims of exploitation and ensuring that women and children who have been exploited receive access to the necessary psychosocial support.

International instruments have been effectively contributing toward an end to trafficking in persons. Yet States need to augment concrete and concerted efforts to work together to put an end to this heinous crime by addressing adequately the demand side of trafficking in persons by strengthening laws against prostitution of children and adults, child pornography and sexual exploitation. The authentic advancement of women begins with full respect for the dignity and worth of all persons. Such respect must take into account the entire life cycle - from conception to natural death - and States have the responsibility to ensure this in their national legislations.

Mr. Chairman,

The authentic advancement of women necessarily entails recognition of the deep fundamental anthropological truths about man and woman, the equality of their dignity and the unity of both, the well-rooted and profound diversity between the masculine and the feminine and their vocation to reciprocity and complementarity, to collaboration and to communion. The more we respect this truth of human nature, the more we will be able to confront the challenges which continue to face women today and assist them on the road to authentic advancement around the world.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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