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Statement of the Holy See to the United Nations at the 59th Session of the Commission on Status of Women (New York, 13 March 2015)

Here below the Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations at the 59th Session of the Commission on Status of Women (New York, 13 March 2015)

Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza

Madame Chair,

My delegation is pleased that the Commission has chosen to reflect upon the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, with a view also to advancing women's empowerment and equality in a post-2015 development agenda.

There has been considerable progress for the cause of women in many countries, especially in the areas of education, political representation, and economic participation. Women are also increasingly leading important public and private efforts to remedy discrimination, alleviate poverty, and address myriad other challenges facing women today.

In spite of the admirable efforts and significant advances, however, still too many women continue to face discrimination and many forms of violence just for being women. Thus all actors must continue to devote their utmost efforts to remedying these violations.

Madame Chair,

The goal of eradicating poverty, in particular extreme poverty, is at the heart of the Holy See's concerns. The Catholic Church has nearly unparalleled experience of the needs of the poor through its bimillennial experience and through hundreds of thousands of programs and institutions serving poor women and men the world over. Pope Francis never tires of urging world leaders and all of us to prioritize the plight of the poor and to use wealth to serve humanity and not vice versa.

The promotion of inclusive and equitable economies has a profound impact in advancing the status of women. Indeed, women are experiencing unique economic distress linked to unfair employment policies, unequal pay for equal work, the denial of access to credit and property, victimization in situations of conflicts and migration. Notwithstanding the fact that women constitute the majority of the poor and are affected by the burden of poverty in very specific ways, they are nevertheless courageously at the forefront in the fight to eradicate extreme poverty. From this perspective, the fight for the advancement of women must also mean assuring them equal access to resources, capital and technology.

Taking into account these disadvantages that many women are still subjected to, solutions to poverty should be formulated with courageous objectives and implemented with sufficient means, so that they can have a real impact in the advancement of women.

Studies have demonstrated that fragile family structures and the decline of marriage among the poor are very closely linked to poverty among women. Single mothers are left alone to raise children. Many mothers in situations of distress fail to send their children to school, thus entangling them in the vicious circle of poverty and marginalization. While Governments and society do not create families, they have crucial roles to play in supporting healthy families and fostering parenting. Numerous reports by the Secretary-General have highlighted the centrality of the family for poverty eradication and sustainable development. The Holy See takes note of the report by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on problems and attacks girls continue to suffer in accessing education. My delegation is convinced that the fight for equal access to education for girls, especially quality education, is an indispensable component in the fight for the advancement of women.

Madame Chair,

On Sunday March 8, Pope Francis conveyed his greetings to all the women across the globe, stressing that “a world where women are marginalized is a sterile world.... Not only do women carry life, but they transmit to us the capacity to see otherwise,” namely, the ability to “understand the world with different eyes.” Women’s contributions to a better world include that generosity to serve gratuitously, and to welcome rather than to exclude.

My delegation reiterates the readiness of Pope Francis to work with all those who are seeking each day to build a world that concretely treats women as equals, in the diversity of gifts and strengths, toward the greater common good of all.

Thank you, Madame Chair.

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