



HOLY SEE

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**Statement by H.E. Archbishop Francis Chullikatt
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65th session of the UN General Assembly

Before the Third Committee, on items 28 (a) and (b):

**Advancement of women and Implementation of the Outcome of the
4th World Conference on Women and the
23rd special session of the General Assembly**

New York, 11 October 2010

Mr. Chairman,

This agenda item on the advancement of women provides us with an opportunity to address various challenges which continue to confront women today. Gratefully numerous countries have made significant strides in promoting the dignity of women; yet more work needs to be done especially given the many forms of violence to which women continue to be subjected in all parts of the world. In this regard, my delegation notes the recent establishment of UN Women and hopes that this new entity will be able to provide real assistance to all States as they work together to improve the lives of women and mothers everywhere.

Many actions have been taken by countries to prevent and address violence against women by strengthening their national legal policy and institutional frameworks. A significant development is that more countries are enacting comprehensive legislation which takes into account both placing just penalties on such violence and providing support to and protection of victims.

Victims of violence need to be provided with adequate support that responds to short-term injuries, protects them from further violence, provides them with legal advice, counseling, psychological and spiritual care, and addresses long-term needs such as finding adequate shelter and employment. Moreover, they need to be provided with full and effective access to justice systems which provide, *inter alia*, free legal aid, interpretation and court support in all legal proceedings.

It is heartening that a significant number of countries are promoting public awareness of, and sensitivity to, societal attitudes that condone violence against women. In this regard it is important to reach out especially to those women who are at times the most needy of assistance, especially mothers, immigrants, rural and indigenous women, women from ethnic and religious minorities and those with physical and psychological disabilities.

Mr. Chairman,

Another aspect of the problem is the tragedy of human trafficking. Gratefully, this past year the United Nations was able to negotiate a *Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons* which demonstrates the importance of raising consciousness with regard to this serious problem. It is important that States increasingly highlight the need to address the conditions that make women and children vulnerable to being trafficked, such as poverty and lack of employment and education opportunities, as part of prevention strategies.

The transnational trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation is based on a commodification of human life that facilitates the supply of victims from sending countries and the demand for victims in receiving countries. For this reason, laws against prostitution, child pornography and sexual exploitation need to be strengthened in order to better protect women and children. The human person is not something to be traded for any purpose!

In protecting and assisting victims of trafficking; ensuring their privacy; and securing their identity and safety before, during and after criminal proceedings, it is essential to make available all appropriate assistance and protection. Moreover, special protections must be made available to child victims of trafficking.

Families of trafficked persons also need protection. Quite often the main obstacle to collaboration between a victim of trafficking and law enforcement is the intimidation of the victims and their families by the traffickers who promise to threaten the victims' families. In particularly grave cases of trafficking, when victims are the main witnesses during prosecution, witness protection programmes should be applied to victims as well as their families.

Legislation that criminalizes all trafficking in persons should be enacted, enforced and strengthened. Moreover, effective cooperation and coordination of efforts at the national, bilateral, sub-regional, regional and international level, especially among countries of origin, transit and destination, should be strengthened.

Mr. Chairman,

The recent Report of the Secretary-General on "Supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula" (A/65/268) calls to mind the attention that countries must continue to devote to the fundamental health of women especially pregnant mothers and those with newborn children. In this regard it is important that basic healthcare be provided to all women and that mothers be provided with essential prenatal care, skilled attendants at all deliveries and specialist care for life threatening complications for both mother and the child yet to be born.

Predicating aid to developing countries on the basis of acceptance of family planning methods not respectful of the human person does nothing to advance the health and wellbeing of women of today and of tomorrow. What is needed instead is a human-centered approach to caring for others, an approach that is fully respectful of the intrinsic dignity and worth of each and every person--from the very beginning of conception to natural death--an approach which sees the individual person not as a burden but as a contribution to the human family.

Mr. Chairman,

The authentic advancement of women entails respect for their inherent dignity, including their ethnic and religious identity. The Holy See for its part has consistently affirmed that for this to happen States must take into account that every life is valuable and has worth and that women must be supported. The wellbeing of the future of the human community depends to a great extent upon the ability of governments and civil society to truly respect women, their dignity and worth.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.