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Archbishop Caccia Delivers Statement At The Third Committee On Racism And Other Related Intolerances.

By H. E. Archbishop Gabriele Caccia

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Mr. Chair,

The first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”[1] While this is a recognized fundamental truth, and would rightly be considered non-negotiable, history has shown that it is constantly being challenged. Indeed, the latest data show that nearly one in six people worldwide experience discrimination, and racial discrimination, based on factors such as ethnicity, colour or language, is among the most common grounds.[2]

As Pope Francis has clearly stated: “we cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.”[3] Racism is an affront to the inherent God-given dignity of every human being, and any theory or form whatsoever of racism and racial discrimination is unacceptable.[4]

Mr. Chair,

While overt racism is easy to identify and rightly condemned, the related prejudices often take more subtle forms. The Holy See would like to draw attention to three areas of particular concern:

First, in a world, where more people are on the move than ever before, migrants, refugees

and their families are frequently targeted by a particularly violent form of racism. Migration can create a sense of fear and anxiety that is often exacerbated and exploited for political ends. As Pope Francis has observed, “this can lead to a xenophobic mentality, as people close in on themselves, and this needs to be addressed decisively.”[5] Migrants must always be seen as human beings who “possess the same intrinsic dignity as any person.”[6]

Second, the Holy See remains deeply concerned about the continuing rise in cases of religious intolerance, discrimination and persecution. Individuals and communities face restrictions and persecution for professing their faith, both in the private and in the public spheres. Such restrictions undermine the fundamental principle of freedom of religion or belief. Given the many places where religious freedom is severely restricted, the Holy See emphasizes that governments bear the primary responsibility to safeguard this right of their citizens, as it is one of the absolute minimum requirements necessary to live in dignity.

Third, the Holy See is particularly concerned about the rise in racism and xenophobia online and on digital platforms. This is particularly prevalent on social media platforms that do not regulate their content. In combatting this scourge, education is of paramount importance, both as a response strategy and as a longer-term preventive measure. This includes not only a renewed commitment to quality education, that enables each person to reach his or her full potential and to pursue the common good, but also the recognition that education begins first and foremost in the family, with parents as the primary educators of human values.

Mr. Chair,

The equal dignity of every human being demands that we never turn a blind eye to racism or exclusion, but rather that we embrace the “other” with openness, recognizing “the rich gifts and uniqueness of each person and each people.”[7] This requires a fundamental change of attitude, beginning with a willingness to engage in dialogue in a spirit of solidarity and fraternity in order to overcome indifference and fear.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[1] Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 1.

[2] Cfr. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Statistics Division: 2023 Report on SDG10.

[3] Pope Francis, General Audience, 3 June 2020.

[4] Cfr. Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, 433.

[5] Pope Francis, Post-Synodal Exhortation *Christus Vivit*, 92.

[6] Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli tutti*, 39.

[7] *Ibid.*, 100.



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