



## **Explanation of position of the Holy See on the Conclusions of the Executive Committee on mental health and psychosocial support**

*Geneva, 14 October 2022*

Mr. Chairperson,

The Holy See is grateful for all the effort that went into the preparation of the Conclusions of this Executive Committee on mental health and psychosocial support this session. In particular, this Delegation wishes to thank the Rapporteur for the transparent and respectful way in which he has conducted the informal consultative process leading up to their adoption today.

Health, including mental health, constitutes a fundamental pillar of integral human development. It is a matter of life and dignity, where the spiritual dimension of the human person must not be overlooked. Suffice it to say, health is not a consumer good and it should never be instrumentalized in favour of political or ideological agendas.

Mr. Chairperson,

Like others, this Delegation is disheartened by the grievous impact of sexual violence. The pain of victims must be more fully recognized and influence measures that better protect every man, woman, boy and girl. Indeed, the strength and wisdom of survivors should be harnessed. At the same time, it is necessary to take into consideration that, “acute stress” is not just a phenomenon that affects victims of sexual violence but also many different types of trauma, resulting, for example, from racial discrimination, torture and other forms of violence.

While keeping in mind the extensive work of the Catholic Church and its institutions alongside the UNHCR in caring for persons in situations of hardship, including mental distress, my Delegation wishes to express the following reservations related to concepts and documents reflected within the present *Conclusions* of the Executive Committee:

- The Holy See dissociates itself from the content of the *Joint Inter-Agency Call of Action on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support* (MHPSS) cited in PP9, which is not an intergovernmentally negotiated document and contains controversial concepts therein;
- By “gender”, my delegation understands “male and female,” according to the general and historical usage of the term, as recalled in its Final Statement offered at the conclusion of the Beijing Conference on Women, on 15 September 1995. “The Holy See thus excludes dubious interpretations based on world views which assert that sexual identity can be adapted indefinitely to suit new and different purposes.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Chairperson,

In conclusion, the Holy See hopes that authentic cooperation among States, UNHCR and civil society, including faith-inspired organizations, will be encouraged, and that concrete support will be given to Countries which, in spite of their own difficulties, host a large number of refugees. Such support should not be subject to political and ideological considerations, but rather given with a genuine spirit of international solidarity, recognizing that we are all members of one human family.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Holy See’s Final Statement at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995.