



**Statement by Archbishop Gabriele Caccia, Permanent Observer
of the Holy See to the United Nations, at the Fifty-Fourth Session
of the Commission on Population and Development
New York, 19-23 April 2021**

Mr. Chair,

The Holy See is pleased to participate in this Fifty-Fourth Session of the Commission on Population and Development and to offer some reflections on its special theme “Population, food security, nutrition and sustainable development.”

Food security and nutrition

Despite the efforts undertaken in the last decades, the number of people experiencing hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition is growing.¹ In many regions of the world, millions of people, including children, do not have access to the most basic resources and lack safe, nutritious and sufficient food. The COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened this grave and widespread situation and has exacerbated the vulnerability of those already living in precarious situations.

Furthermore, solutions to food insecurity and malnutrition have proven to be far more complex than food production alone. While 820 million of the world’s people suffer from hunger, almost 700 million are overweight, victims of improper dietary habits². To ensure, therefore, that every person has access to his or her daily bread, it is essential, instead, to guarantee that the distribution of food is equitable and that healthy diets are accessible and affordable to all.

Concrete measures to end hunger and malnutrition must always respect human dignity and the recognition of the right of every person to be free from poverty, hunger and malnutrition. This entails the duty of the entire human family to provide practical assistance to those most in need.

In this regard, the Catholic Church, through her many organizations, initiatives and charities present on the ground throughout the world, is at the

¹ FAO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*, 2020.

² Cf. Pope Francis, Message for the World Food Day, 2019.

forefront of efforts to ensure that no one goes hungry. In many cases, the meals that they distribute are the only source of quality and nutritious food, especially for the rural and urban poor, migrants and refugees, the homeless, and the elderly, who, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, have been affected by even greater exclusion, isolation and loneliness.

Population and integral human development

Population growth is often cited as a major cause of the increasing numbers of people experiencing food insecurity, leading to the conclusion that fertility rate reduction strategies are the answer. The past decades, however, have shown this to be incorrect. Population growth has rather gone hand in hand with significant increases in food production, demonstrating that it is fully compatible with shared prosperity and the achievement of integral human development for every person.

Consequently, the real challenge before us is not the world's growing population, which is a great resource, but rather inequality, poverty and lack of development. The remedy should be sought in authentic, integral and sustainable development efforts-and, in particular, in policies and programmes that stimulate employment, ensure investments in basic public services for all, foster good stewardship of resources, including natural resources, and assist the family – the fundamental unit of society – by providing it with adequate and efficient means of support, both for bringing up children and looking after the elderly, those in vulnerable situations and those with disabilities.

The violation of the inherent and inalienable right of every person to life is not and must never be the answer to the many challenges arising from sustainable development, population growth and the rising level of food insecurity and malnutrition. Rather, respect for life from the moment of conception to natural death must be at the core of development policies. Moreover, international solidarity and aid should be encouraged and genuinely focused on the priorities and needs of the receiving nations.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.