Concept Note for the Side Event Entitled

“Promoting the Integral Development of Rural Women and Girls in Africa in the Era of Ideological Colonization”

To be held during the 62nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

UN HQ Conference Room 4
March 19, 2018 • 11:30 am to 12:45 pm

Background

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, governments, the private sector and civil society have been encouraged to foster the promotion of women and girls as a driver of development and catalyst for positive change.

For this change to occur, however, the global community must recognize that the promotion of women cannot be realized unless rural girls and women, who are among the most underrepresented and underserved populations in the world, are prioritized. This is especially noticeable in parts of Africa where women and girls are vulnerable also to mistreatment and exploitation, even at the hands of those who are offering assistance in the form of foreign aid.

The continent of Africa receives more than $50 billion of aid annually from Western donors. Foreign aid can be a lifeline to African rural communities when the assistance from governments, NGOs and private donors is rooted in respect for human dignity, human rights, and human life in every stage of development, and when it respects the faith, traditions and values of the people being assisted.

When this vision is compromised by developed donor societies to impose their own worldview and values on developing societies, when humanitarian aid is tied to demands to accept particular western values and practices, this is ideological colonization, which is an affront to developing peoples and leads to harm and suffering, with rural populations most burdened by the consequences. In the last 20 years, there has been a shift in foreign aid budgets away from development aid and towards population control programs targeting African countries. Recently, this population control spending has surpassed education, health, water supply & sanitation, government and civil society and other social issues.

3 http://data.oecd.org/

1 Note Of The Holy See On The First Anniversary Of The Adoption Of The Sustainable Development Goals
2 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), analysis of social sector ODA to Africa 1996-2013
Pope Francis called attention to this “ideological colonization” — a term he employed during his September 25, 2015 Address to the General Assembly — as the use of development models to impose “anomalous models and lifestyles that are alien to people’s identity.” “Debatable notions of human rights,” the Pope continued, “have been advanced that are at odds with the culture of many countries. The latter feel that they are not respected in their social and cultural traditions, and instead neglected with regard to the real needs they have to face. Somewhat paradoxically, there is a risk that, in the very name of human rights, we will see the rise of modern forms of ideological colonization by the stronger and the wealthier, to the detriment of the poorer and the most vulnerable.”

Powerful and wealthy countries, both through direct official development assistance as well as through certain UN agencies, are conditioning the reception of development assistance on the acceptance of radical social agendas with regard to human sexuality, abortion, family structure and even basic anthropology, under the guise of new “rights.” The Pope has gone so far as to call this ideological colonization a “world war… not with weapons but with ideas.”

No one has detailed this phenomenon better than those who are enduring it. In 2015, the Catholic Bishops of Africa and Madagascar spoke out together in a Common Declaration about how some western governments are trying to impose their values on African peoples as a condition for receiving urgently needed health supplies, educational investments, other forms of development assistance and military help to end the endemic conflicts on the continent. Their language is strong and specific about how their human dignity and so many of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration are being bulldozed in order to receive the help needed to lift their peoples out of extreme poverty.

“Selfish and perverse interests,” they write, “are imposing themselves on our continent with a speed that keeps on accelerating, with unabated aggressiveness, in an ever more organized and powerfully financed manner, introducing individualism and hedonism, both of which are so foreign to what we are and want to be, into our societies. This is a terrifying resurgence of a colonialist spirit under the guise of the appealing names of liberty, equality, rights, autonomy, democratization and development. Condoms, contraceptives, sex education programs fabricated elsewhere, … so-called ‘safe abortions,’ have become commodities that are more accessible to Africans than the way of delivering integral development, of which we have such a vital need. It can no longer be denied that under the euphemism of ‘sexual and reproductive health and rights,’ such programs are plainly imposed as a condition for development assistance. Such is also the case of the so-called ‘gender perspective,’ according to which motherhood, the filial and nuptial identity of the human being and the family based on marriage between a man and a woman would be ‘discriminatory stereotypes.’ The agents of the civilization of death are using ambivalent language, seducing decision-makers and entire populations, in order to make them partners in the pursuit of their ideological objectives. They are coopting a great many in partnerships of which they are, in reality, the masters. They take advantage of poverty, weakness and ignorance in order to subject peoples and governments to their blackmail. This is a new type of slavery!”

Pope Francis, the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar, and many others have thus been pointing out some of the ways in which some developed nations are trying to use the sustainable development

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“Without the recognition of certain incontestable natural ethical limits and without the immediate implementation of those pillars of integral human development, the ideal of “saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war” (Charter of the United Nations, Preamble), and “promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” (ibid.), risks becoming an unattainable illusion, or, even worse, idle chatter which serves as a cover for all kinds of abuse and corruption, or for carrying out an ideological colonization by the imposition of anomalous models and lifestyles which are alien to people’s identity and, in the end, irresponsible.”

agenda and the universal desire to eradicate extreme poverty in order to push policies contrary to the human rights and wishes of the people being helped. It needs to be called out for the violation it is — and it needs to be addressed and stopped. If the 2030 agenda is to be met, the international community must oppose and condemn Ideological Colonization. The development system should never be used by developed nations to infringe upon the cultural and religious values of a developing nation.

In this event, we will hear from several speakers from Africa giving witness to the breadth of ideological colonization in the sphere of the family, life, and education and the psychological and social consequences that flow from it. There will be a particular focus on ideological colonization directed at rural women and girls through population control programs and comprehensive sexual education programs that violate local values.

Speakers

- **Archbishop Bernardito Auza**, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations
- **Obianuju Ekeocha**, Founder and President of Culture of Life Africa and author of *Target Africa: Ideological Neo-colonialism of the Twenty-first Century.*
- **Sheila K. Muchemi**, Ph.D. candidate in clinical psychology whose research focuses on cultural issues around mental health in Africa.
- **Aketch Aimba**, Founder and Director of Pearls and Treasures Trust in Kenya that provides support for women who have been wounded by abortion.
- **Joy Mdivo**, Executive Director, East Africa Centre for Law and Justice.

Sponsors
Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations, Culture of Life Africa, Campaign Life Coalition, and Human Life International

Registration
To RSVP for the event, please visit holyseemission.org/RSVP19March2018 by March 13. All those without UN grounds passes (for example, UN Delegates passes, NGO passes, or CSW passes) must register for a special event pass at this link. Those with UN passes are asked to register as well to ensure that there is enough space for them in the room.