

Genderideologie: accepteren van ons lichaam zoals het geschapen is

Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See at the Side Event entitled “Gender Equality and Gender Ideology: Protecting Women and Girls” United Nations, New York, 20 March 2019

Your
Excellencies, Distinguished Panelists, Dear Friends,

I am very
happy to welcome you to this morning’s event on gender equality and gender ideology and the need to protect women and girls, which the Holy See is pleased to be sponsoring, together with the Heritage Foundation.

Each year
the Economic and Social Council hosts the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to promote, report on and monitor issues relating to the political, economic, civil, social and educational rights of women. When the CSW first began meeting in 1947 in Lake Success, New York, there was a clear understanding of what it meant to be a woman. Even though over the course of the subsequent 62 years, there have been various debates among women from different continents and backgrounds over the goals and rights of women and the best means to achieve them, everyone knew to whom they were referring when they spoke, for example, about gender equality, violence against women, girls’ education, or equal pay for equal work. Even as recently as 2011, when the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women, was founded, everyone knew whom it was representing and whose cause it was seeking to advance: the approximately half of the human race born with the capacity for motherhood, with two X chromosomes, with particular physical, hormonal, and relational traits that distinguish them from the approximate other half of the human race, men.

That
consensus has unfortunately been getting eroded due to the recent phenomenon of gender identity and gender ideology. Whereas before everyone knew what “woman” meant based on her bodily nature, now many proponents of gender ideology assert that bodily nature has nothing intrinsically to do with womanhood beyond how sex is “assigned” at birth. Womanhood, rather, is looked at as the way one thinks about oneself, or expresses oneself, and therefore, they argue, those who consider themselves women must be treated as women, regardless of biological nature at the cellular, endocrinological or reproductive levels, regardless of primary and secondary sexual characteristics, or other factors.

This way of
looking at womanhood primarily as a self-identity independent of bodily considerations was raised at the beginning of this 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in the statement given by the LGBTI Core Group, delivered by the Permanent Representative of Norway, Ambassador Mona

Juul. The Statement said that the LGBTI Core Group — an informal cross regional group of 28 Member States together with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the NGOs Human Rights Watch and Outright Action International — spoke explicitly about “transgender persons” whose “names and sex details in official documents do not match their gender identity or expression.” It said it “stands ready to work with all partners to ensure that all women and girls — no matter their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics — have adequate and equal access to social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure.”

The LGBTI

Core Group was saying that the understanding of “women and girls” should be based on “gender identity or expression” rather than on their biological sex. This understanding of womanhood would likely have astonished the 15 original members of the CSW in 1947 and most of the delegates who have represented their governments and NGOs here each year since.

Whereas 62

years ago, it was not necessary to ask the important preliminary question, “What is woman?,” because everyone everywhere had a clear and univocal understanding of what this meant, now, when that understanding is being challenged and many are seeking to stipulate a fundamental change in its meaning, the international community must ask it.

The reason

is because so much depends on the answer, not only in terms of law, education, economy, health, safety, sports, language and culture, as we will hear about today from our speakers — Mary Hasson, Emilie Kao, Monique Robles and Ryan Anderson — but also in terms of basic anthropology, human dignity, human rights, marriage and family, motherhood and fatherhood, and the cause of women, men, and especially children. To substitute gender identity or expression for biological sex has enormous ramifications in all of these areas and for that reason we must, with courtesy and compassion, ask the perhaps uncomfortable questions because the answers matter.

Pope

Francis, while emphatically encouraging Catholics and all people of good will to support, welcome, accompany and love all those whose gender identity does not match their biological sex, to affirm their human dignity and defend their fundamental human rights to be free of violence and unjust discrimination (October 2, 2016), at the same time has been very clear about the dangers to individuals and society flowing from gender ideology.

He says

that the anthropological underpinnings of gender ideology, by denying the “difference and reciprocity in nature of a man and a woman,” by promoting a “personal identity and emotional intimacy radically separated from the biological difference between male and female,” ultimately makes human identity “the choice of the individual” and undermines the “anthropological basis for

the family.” It is “one thing to be understanding of human weakness and the complexities of life,” he continues, “and another to accept ideologies that attempt to sunder what are inseparable aspects of reality.” We are called, he emphasized, “to protect our humanity, and this means, in the first place, accepting it and respecting it as it was created” (*Amoris Laetitia*, 56). Our sex, just like our genes, our race, our age, and other natural characteristics, are objective givens, not subjective choices.

In his encyclical on Care for our Common Home, *Laudato Si'*, which has become perhaps the most commonly cited papal document in U.N. history since its 2015 release in anticipation of the Paris Agreement, he said, “Acceptance of our bodies ... is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift, ... whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Moreover, valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different.” He added elsewhere, “The complementarity of man and woman ... is being questioned by the so-called gender ideology in the name of a more free and just society,” and stressed, “The differences between man and woman are not for opposition or subordination, but for communion and generation” (June 8, 2015). Rather than leading to a more free and just society, in other words, gender ideology hinders communion and generation between men and women. It’s a “step backwards,” because “the removal of [sexual] difference in fact creates a problem, not a solution” (April 15, 2015).

When the natural, complementary duality of man and woman is called into question, the very notion of being — what it means to be human — is undermined. The body no longer is a defining element of humanity. The person is reduced to spirit and will and the human being almost becomes an abstraction until one discerns what nature one is or chooses what gender one wants to be. Pope Francis is particularly concerned about gender ideology being taught to children, so that boys and girls are encouraged to question, at the earliest ages of existence, whether they are a boy or girl and are told that gender is something one can choose (July 27, 2016). He has also expressed concern about cultural pressure, what he terms “ideological colonization,” being placed on countries, and cultures and individuals who resist this new and indeed radical anthropology.

So today at this event, we’re concerned with big and important questions about what it means to be human, what it means to be a woman, what is the best way to treat with compassion those whose self-identity does not correspond to their biological sex, how we should respond to challenges to impute the category of gender identity into legal protections based on sexual identity, and, within the Commission on the Status of Women, how best to protect and advance the



cause and equality of women and girls.

I thank you
for coming and joining the conversation.