



Statement by H.E. Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič, Permanent Representative of the Holy See
to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Geneva
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Mr. President,

At the outset, the Holy See would like to congratulate you, Ambassador Dzung, on your appointment as General Assembly Chair for the biennium 2018-19. We acknowledge your commitment and dedication over the past few months in preparing for this Assembly meeting. Our congratulations and thanks are addressed also to the Vice-Chairs. We take this opportunity moreover to thank the Secretariat for its hard work, hidden but very precious, in the run up to this GA.

Mr. Chair, this organisation has achieved significant progress and tangible results in the last few years. Innovation is taking place at an accelerated speed, becoming a central element in the economic and industrial strategies of numerous countries. The global landscape of investment in science and technology, as well as in education and human capital, has undergone important positive shifts over the last three decades. Today both innovation and research & development are a serious policy ambition in most developed and developing economies and in all regions of the world. As reported by the Global Innovation Index: “global R&D expenditures have continued to rise, more than doubling over the (last) 20-year(s)”.¹

The fundamental importance of innovation as a major driver to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is recognized in SDG 9. Indeed, a recent UN General Assembly resolution acknowledged: “the vital role that science, technology and innovation, including environmentally sound technologies, can play in development and in facilitating efforts to address global challenges (...) improve productivity and competitiveness and ultimately support sustainable development”.²

¹ Global Innovation Index Report 2018, p. xxix

² A/RES/72/242, adopted without a vote on December 22, 2017.

Nevertheless, technology is disrupting the *status quo* and creating an uncertain future. The rapid development of “big data”, automation and artificial intelligence (AI) is affecting how firms conduct their economic activities, how citizens take part in cultural and political processes, how creative engagement takes place and, finally, how daily life decisions are made as decisive functions are increasingly carried out not only by human beings but also by machines. The effort to develop “intelligent machines” must be continuously directed to the greater good, reducing the poverty gap and facing general needs for health, education, happiness and sustainability. Unless it is carefully directed to the public good, AI may soon become a source of concern both for the economy and for the very stability of society. As Pope Francis remarked: “artificial intelligence, robotics and other technological innovations must be so employed that they contribute to the service of humanity and to the protection of our common home, rather than to the contrary, as some assessments unfortunately foresee”.³

Access to medicines is a key component of the right to health, as guaranteed under international human rights law. Thus, Sustainable Development Goal 3 also includes targets to support “the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries,” and to provide “access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on TRIPs Agreement and Public Health”. The world’s focus and commitment to these goals must remain strong, in order to build a more sustainable world for all people by 2030.⁴

In line with SDG 17, which seeks to encourage partnerships in order to strengthen implementation of the SDGs, WIPO has initiated several successful public-private partnerships that contributed to the implementation of the SDGs in various ways. The Holy See would like to express its appreciation for the *Accessible Books Consortium*, which contributes to quality education, the *WIPO Re:Search* programme, which contributes to good health and well-being, and in particular the *WIPO GREEN* initiative, which contributes to climate action.

In conclusion,

³ Message of Pope Francis to the Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum on the occasion of the annual gathering in Davos, January 24, 2018.

⁴ 2016 Meeting on Ending AIDS: Fast Track to Ending AIDS, UNAIDS: Geneva, 2015.

Given the increased importance of intellectual property, and indeed the rising interest in the question of IP and in the programmes and services of this Organization, these Assemblies are called to exercise wise discernment and “to put into action our responsibility to contribute to the development of humanity”.⁵ Mr Chair, please, be assured that you can count on the constructive contribution of the Holy See’s delegation during these Assemblies.

I thank you, Mr. Chair.

⁵ Message of Pope Francis to the Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum on the occasion of the annual gathering in Davos, January 24, 2018.