

Statement by H.E. Archbishop Bernardito Auza
Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Observer of the Holy See

Seventy-third Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Sixth Committee
Agenda item 82: **Report of the International Law Commission on the
work of its seventieth session (Cluster I)**
New York, 22-24 October 2018

Mr. Chair,

As the *Report of the International Law Commission* warns, “more than 70 States” that is, more than one third of the members of the international community, “are or are likely to be directly affected by sea-level rise.”¹ Many other States are likely to be affected indirectly, not only by land loss, but also by the displacement of peoples and by the loss of natural resources. The global rise in sea-level is thus a major challenge which requires a global response.

Mr. Chair,

Addressing such a complex reality demands above all an integrated ethical approach. We cannot speak about marine and coastal ecosystems without considering the men and women who rely on them, since the human and the natural environment flourish or deteriorate together. In his Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis underscores the need for an “*integral ecology*, one which clearly respects [the] human and social dimensions”² of nature. “[W]e cannot adequately combat environmental degradation,” he said, “unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. ... For example, the depletion of fishing reserves especially hurts small fishing communities without the means to replace those resources; water pollution particularly affects the poor who cannot buy bottled water; and rises in the sea level mainly affect impoverished coastal populations who have nowhere else to go.”³

An ethical approach to the challenges posed by sea-level rise must also respect the rights and needs of future generations. As Pope Francis reminds us, “intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice,

