

## **Vatican: Presentation of the Second International Conference on Women**

Friday, May 22, 2015 12:49 am.



A press conference was held yesterday at the Vatican to present the second International Conference on Women which opens today. The two-day event is organised by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, in collaboration with the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) and the World Women's Alliance for Life and Family (WWALF). The theme of the conference is: 'Women and the post-2015 development agenda - the challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)'.

The conference will be attended by over a hundred mainly women participants, from diverse cultural and social contexts and from all five continents, and will aim to offer the most complete overview possible of the main issues that affect women throughout the world in our times.

The speakers at the press conference were Cardinal Peter Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; Flaminia Giovanelli, under-secretary of the same dicastery; Olimpia Tarzia, president of the WWALF, and Maria Giovanni Ruggieri, president of the WUCWO.

Cardinal Turkson explained that the first day, 22 May, will begin with an analysis of female anthropology in the context of modern culture, which will also seek to shed light on recent and increasingly incisive semantic changes in terms of reference.

The second panel will focus on the theme of education and the role of women

in this field, as well as "the alliance between men and women and their mutual respect ... in order to combat violence and abuse of power". The cardinal emphasised that "education is an essential resource for ensuring the right to life, which is still denied in some parts of the planet where the birth of a female child is seen as a misfortune, since the sole destiny of a woman is an arranged marriage for which the family is required to provide a dowry".

Another theme is interreligious dialogue as a path towards lasting peace, and the role of women in this context. "The many episodes in recent times in which women and girls have been victims of unspeakable atrocities involving sexual violence, also and above all due to their Christian faith, are an important challenge to us. Such episodes demand that we intensify interreligious dialogue and appeal to our shared human nature, that transcends all religions and cultures, to forcefully condemn such atrocities in order to protect those under threat".

The second International Conference on Women will also offer the opportunity to discuss the many old and new forms of slavery and violence that affect women in various ways in different parts of the world. While in the western world domestic violence prevails and there is an increasing incidence of episodes of so-called "femicide", in other poorer areas of developing countries the infanticide of female children and selective abortion of female foetuses are widespread practices.

Inspired by Pope Francis' Message for Peace, the theme of which this year is "Slaves no more, but brothers and sisters", the Conference will denounce the phenomenon of human trafficking which the Pontiff has on numerous occasions described as a crime against humanity whose victims are, for the most part, girls and women.

Cardinal Turkson said: "While in many countries there has certainly been significant progress in favour of women, especially in the fields of education, political representation and economic participation, much still remains to be done", observed the president of Justice and Peace, noting that it is true that poverty continues to affect women disproportionately, and many women "have no protection in many fields, including domestic, manufacturing and agricultural work,"

However, the Conference does not intend merely to provide an overview of the most urgent matters linked to the conditions of women, or to be simply an opportunity to denounce the violations of the dignity of women and their rights, he explained. It will also endeavour to offer a contribution that may be useful within the framework of current negotiations for the new agenda for post-2015 developments. Therefore, on the second day of the meeting, on Saturday 23 May, working groups will focus on the main thematic areas of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

"The question of women is transversal and crucial in the majority of the

current proposals of the SDGs: women play a key role in the reduction of poverty, hunger throughout the world, and education, and are also the guardians of life in all its phases," the Cardinal concluded.

*Source: VIS*