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

High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate and promote the
International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace
New York, 24 April 2019

Madam President,

The Holy See wishes to thank you for convening this high-level plenary meeting on the
important and timely topic of multilateralism and diplomacy for peace.

As we discuss how to strengthen the multilateral system, my Delegation would like to recall
that an indispensable condition for the success of multilateral diplomacy is the good will and
good faith of the parties, their readiness to cooperate and to treat one another with respect,
honesty and fairness, and their openness to find common solutions to overcome disputes.
Whenever even one of these elements is missing, the result is a search for unilateral solutions
and normally, in the end, the domination of the powerful over the weak.

Madam President,

In his Address to the Diplomatic Corps at the beginning of this year, Pope Francis spoke of
the purpose of multilateral diplomacy, its characteristics and its responsibilities in the
contemporary context. He highlighted four points.¹

The first is the primacy of justice and law. It is troubling to see the re-emergence of
tendencies to impose and pursue individual national interests without having recourse to
the instruments provided by international law for resolving controversies and ensuring that
justice is respected, also through international Courts. Such an attitude at times results from
the reaction of government leaders to growing unease among their citizens, who perceive
the procedures and rules governing the international community as slow, abstract and
ultimately far removed from their own concrete needs. Yet, the need to respect law and
justice remains essential, both within their national communities and within the
international community. Reactive, emotional and hasty solutions may garner short-term
consensus; they will not, however, resolve the deeper problems but rather run the risk of
aggravating them.

The second point is the defense of those who are in the most vulnerable situations. In its
efforts toward leaving no one behind, the international community has the mission to hear

¹ Cf. Pope Francis, Address to the Members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See for the traditional
exchange of New Year Greetings, 7 January 2019.
the cries of those in distress, to give a voice to those who have none and to denounce those actions that affect their lives: we think of the victims of the ongoing conflicts and war, Christian and other ethnic and religious communities living in the Middle East, displaced persons who have been forced to flee their homes, and those forced to migrate on account of poverty, persecution, natural catastrophes and climatic disturbances. Peace is never a partial good, but one that embraces the entire human race. Diplomacy for peace must have no fear to encounter strangers, the poor and the suffering, and to listen to what they have to say.

Third, multilateralism has the function of being a bridge between peoples and peace builders. Peace, in effect, is the fruit of a great cultural and political project grounded in the mutual responsibility and interdependence of human beings. Peace demands constant renewal and effort because it is not achieved once and for all. It is a challenge ever ancient and ever new. It entails a conversion of heart and soul; it is both interior and communal; it is farsighted and not limited to seeking short-term solutions but asks for patience, dialogue and respect for others’ positions, a shared seeking of a mutual benefit.

Fourth and lastly, multilateral diplomacy invites us to stay focused on our common destiny and on the appropriate means to achieve it. International relations cannot be held captive to military force, mutual intimidation, and stockpiles of arms, which involve enormous expense and will never constitute the basis for peaceful coexistence among members of the human family. Our shared destiny must rather be inspired by an ethics of solidarity and involve a reconsideration of our relationship with our common home, rediscovering the grandeur of the gift of the world we have received and our individual and shared responsibility as stewards, citizens and builders of its future.

Madam President,

A renewed understanding of multilateralism must be founded on the idea of the international community as a “family of nations” committed to pursuing the good of all. It requires the exercise of solidarity on the part of Governments, international organizations, and all men and women. Its firm foundation is a collective and shared responsibility for the common good and for the development of those who are most in need, so that every person may be welcomed and participate as a member of the global family.

Thank you, Madam President.