



25 November 2022

British Embassy to the Holy See

Press release for immediate release: "A Walk to Raise Awareness of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence"

On Sunday 27 November 2022, the British Embassy to the Holy See, jointly with The World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO) and the Vatican sports team, Athletica Vaticana, will be holding a walk across Rome to shine a spotlight on the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war in conflicts all over the world.

The walk, which is free and open to all, takes place on the eve of the [International Conference on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict](#), which aims to strengthen the global response to conflict-related sexual violence.

Christopher Trott, the British Ambassador to the Holy See, will lead the walk, jointly with Maria Lía Zervino, President General of WUCWO, and Dr Giampaolo Mattei, President of Athletica Vaticana. Members of the diplomatic corps to the Holy See, representatives of Catholic networks, NGOs and the British community in Rome, among others, will participate.

The itinerary will follow the cycle path along the Tiber (3 km), starting at Piazza San Bartolomeo all'Isola (Isola Tiberina) at 10 am. The walk will end at St Peter's Square, where the group will be attending the Sunday Angelus with Pope Francis.

The British Ambassador to the Holy See, Christopher Trott, said:

"I am proud of my government's efforts over the last 10 years to shine the spotlight on the abhorrent practice of conflict-related sexual violence. Sadly, however, it continues to shatter lives and scar communities around the world. During my career, I myself have heard chilling personal stories from survivors and witnessed first-hand the devastating impact on victims, their families and entire communities, from my first posting in Myanmar to my most recent ones in South Sudan and in the Solomon Islands. And we are now seeing sexual violence being used as a weapon of war by the occupying forces in Ukraine. This is completely unacceptable. Women and girls must be protected in all situations, but especially in conflict zones. This walk is an important opportunity to raise awareness and call for strengthened global action. My thanks to WUCWO, Athletica Vaticana and all participants for their support."

Maria Lía Zervino, WUCWO President General said:

"The walk through the streets of Rome, as a gesture of support for the prevention of sexual violence used as a weapon of war, is a wonderful initiative of the British Embassy to the Holy See, accompanied by Athletica Vaticana and WUCWO. Following the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, WUCWO invites the community to join it in affirming what Pope

Francis, in *Fratelli Tutti*, said: “Doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights” (*Fratelli Tutti*, 23). By walking together, we show that the quest for fraternity and social friendship is possible.”

Giampaolo Mattei, President Atletica Vaticana, stated:

“Atletica Vaticana’s sports community renews Pope Francis’ tireless encouragement to pray and work for peace. Even through seemingly "small" gestures, like walking together. Indeed, building relationships of friendship, which become fraternal, is the simple and clear answer to the horrific and senseless reality of war, a real blasphemy. As the Pope recalls, war brings out the worst side of human beings: selfishness, violence, and lies. From Tiber Island to St Peter’s Square, we will walk, along with our families, in spiritual closeness to all victims, whose dignity has not been taken away by the injustice suffered.”

The [International Conference on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict](#) (London, 28-29 November), hosted by the UK Government, will seek to galvanise the world into further action to tackle sexual violence in conflict by promoting prevention, justice and support for survivors, and strengthening the international architecture on these issues. It is a follow-up to the ground-breaking UK-hosted global summit in 2014 with former Foreign Secretary William Hague and Angelina Jolie. This year marks 10 years from the launch of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative.

Notes for editors:

- Follow the walk on Twitter: @UKinHolySee @ChrisTrott #ForSurvivorsWithSurvivors;
- For further information or interview requests, please contact Simona Prete, Head of Communications, British Embassy to the Holy See (Simona.Prete@fcdo.gov.uk; Whatsapp 335/7516848).
- For further information about the UK’s International Ministerial Conference on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative 2022, see [here](#).