

44th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, 30 June – 20 July 2020

Panel discussion: Realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment

Oral statement delivered by: Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23)

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Madame President,

The High Commissioner for Human Rights, in her report “Realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment”¹, states that the quality of the environment is a fundamental determinant of children’s right to health and that “much of the environmental burden of disease on children is completely preventable”.

According to the 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Service the health of our ecosystems is deteriorating more rapidly than ever², and everyone will have to deal with the consequences of this deterioration. Even the COVID-19 outbreak calls attention to the threats to ecosystems and wildlife.³

In June 2020 to mark the World Environment Day Pope Francis stated: “The protection of the environment and respect for the biodiversity of the planet are issues that affect us all. We cannot pretend to be healthy in a world that is sick. The wounds inflicted on our mother earth are wounds that also bleed in us. Caring for ecosystems demands a look to the future, one that is not concerned only with the immediate moment or that seeks a quick and easy profit, but rather one that is concerned for life and that seeks its preservation for the benefit of all”.⁴

We have endangered our own life by failing to care for the earth and we have failed to take care of the numerous children that at this moment are suffering and will suffer because of, inter alia, detrimental living conditions, discrimination, ill health, social exclusion, poverty due to the “needs” of sick societies that put profit before human beings and are ready to leave behind many children.

We would like to ask the panellists which priority steps should be taken regarding children’s rights of healthy environments in this context in which Governments are dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic?

Thank You!

1 A/HRC/43/30

2 https://ipbes.net/sites/default/files/2020-02/ipbes_global_assessment_report_summary_for_policymakers_en.pdf

3 <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/coronavirus-outbreak-highlights-need-address-threats-ecosystems-and-wildlife>

4 http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20200605_lettera-giornata-ambiente.html