

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

Interactive Dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children

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

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Madame President,

APG23 takes note of the Annual report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children that “outlines the impact that violence has on children’s mental health and provides an overview of major initiatives and developments to sustain and scale up efforts to safeguard children’s freedom from violence and advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.¹

In particular, we would like to focus on the impact of institutionalization and deprivation of liberty that can include “severe developmental delays, disability, irreversible psychological damage and increased rates of suicide and recidivism”. As the report states “there are negative cognitive effects associated with institutionalization, especially for younger children (...)”.

As we celebrate the Anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we would like to emphasise the right of all children to grow up in a family, and the need for families to be granted the necessary protection and support to fully carry on their role within the community and the society at large.

Governments and other social entities have to work tirelessly to put the family at the centre of economic and social policies, to minimize the risk of desegregation of the family itself and therefore the consequential separation of its components in order to avoid the dreadful repercussions on children’s life.

When, unfortunately, the family of origin is not able, for different and serious reasons, to take care of the child, a substitute family or a family-like community should be the preferential answer in today’s social context. APG23 promotes and supports the culture of welcoming and fostering, to guarantee to every child the right to a family. The essential psychological needs of minors who are unable to remain in their natural family are manifold and need to be fulfilled within another family environment in order for a child to grow in a healthy way.

We urge the Member States to put the protection of the family as a priority by developing appropriate policies in support of families in critical situations, and to give proper recognition to foster care initiatives for children in distress.

Thank You!

¹ A/HRC/43/39