



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

Item 3: ID with Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

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

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Madame President,

APG23 takes note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

In his report, he states that there is the need to promote the conditions and social resources that foster healthy aging and to develop policies and allocate resources that allow older persons to remain integrated into their communities.¹

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has shown how the system of care homes has failed the elderly population not only in different States but also under different perspectives.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the elderly population has been devastating not only from a physical health point of view but also from the perspective of mental health and social well-being, especially for those without access to digital technology and therefore in peril of being isolated from help and support.

In many cases, older persons have seen their access to medical treatment and care reduced, their possibility of seeing and holding hands with loved ones annulled, even to the extent of dying alone without the comfort of family and friends. The same structures and measures that were supposed to protect them, have failed inexorably. Older people have been often treated as dischargeable, they were ignored and forgotten. In different settings and for different reasons elderly persons have paid a higher price.

If it is true that every crisis represents also an opportunity, this is the chance to reconsider how health can be pursued avoiding or confining institutionalization as last resource. Maybe a different answer is possible and needed.

During these last few months, many families and family-like communities have protected their elderly and weak ones while the system and the institutions have failed to do so. Obviously, in a family, because of its very nature, no one is left behind.

The elderly deserved better than what they have received during this pandemic.

We would like to ask the SR which role may civil society and older persons have in helping Governments to develop and implement appropriate policies that support families and communities in which older people live and are integrated.

Thanks You!

¹ A/HRC/44/48