



**46th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, 22 February – 23 March 2021**

**Item 3 - General Debate - ID with SR on sale of children**

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

*Check against delivery*

Madam President,

APG23 takes note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children.

COVID-19 has changed the context in which children live and the crisis is having a profound effect on children's wellbeing. Stigma and discrimination related to COVID-19 make children more vulnerable to violence, psychosocial distress, sexual exploitation and hazardous or exploitative labour.

Economic distress and the removal of children from a protective environment has exacerbated these risks and has forced some children into child marriage, transactional sex and female genital mutilation. Children without parental care, those living in conflict settings or unsanitary and crowded conditions are especially vulnerable to exploitation and other negative repercussions.

Moreover, we would like to draw your attention on the consequences of the suspension of school classes, particularly for children living in rural areas, where there is limited internet connectivity and where, due to poverty, and boys and girls may feel extra pressure to help their families financially amid the pandemic.

Advocacy with governments, close collaboration and coordination with child protection actors, religious and traditional leaders, and child protection-specific programs must be considered as priorities during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is important to monitor the situation of children and the services on which they depend, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable children, especially children with mental and physical disabilities.

We encourage States to allocate additional resources to create programmes to sustain child-centred services and to mitigate the negative impacts of the virus.

Solidarity is necessary more than ever! Governments, civil society, and other stakeholders have to act together for the world's children that are our future.

Thank you!