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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



“Overcoming Multiple Crises: Realising The Sustainable Development Goals Through A Human Rights Enhancing Economy”

Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) appreciates the theme "Overcoming Multiple Crises: Realising the SDGs Through a Human Rights Enhancing Economy", which has been chosen for the Fifth inter-sessional meeting for dialogue and cooperation on human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (1) that took place in Geneva on 19 January 2023.

The recent outbreaks of devastating emergencies with a synchronic global impact have overlapped with pre-existing structural weaknesses and unbalances at the international level. This multiple crises scenario is profoundly shaping our lives and shaking the same foundations of the global architecture in different domains. Necessarily, the cross-cutting and interrelated effects of this scenario can only be faced and overcome with equally complex, comprehensive and multi-dimensional solutions.

The international community had already developed an ambitious programme of action which in many ways meets these criteria, at least in its formulation: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Even taking into account its limitations and inconsistencies, the 2030 Agenda offers a systemic road-map to face a wide range of challenges and gaps related to the social, economic, environmental and governance dimensions of development at national and international level. The interlinkages among its goals and targets and its multi-level approach, combined with its cross-cutting and action-oriented nature, make the 2030 Agenda the globally agreed framework best suited for dealing with the multifaceted challenges of this multiple crisis scenario.

Despite having an already available tool for driving the needed policy solutions, and notwithstanding the countless declaratory commitments to fully realize it, regrettably the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is not advancing: on the contrary, it is regressing in many areas. But, even more than a decade ago when the 2030 Agenda was being designed and negotiated, enhancing its implementation is crucial for ensuring a more just, healthy, peaceful and sustainable future for all, as well as for strengthening our common efforts to reverse the effects of the multiple global crisis affecting our world.

Pushing forward the implementation of the 2030 Agenda should therefore be at the core of these efforts by the international community. The huge gaps in resource mobilization and political engagement that have so far frustrated the SDGs' achievements should be finally filled. Multilateral measures and national policies should be coherently developed and realized within the overarching framework of the 2030 Agenda, by truly enhancing its transformational vision and fulfilling the shared principles and commitments at its core (2), especially its being grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties. The cross-cutting, universal and indivisible nature of the 2030 Agenda, indeed, reflects also this deep connection with human rights in all their components (civil, political, economic, social and cultural, including the right to development) and for all people in all countries, including both developed and developing countries.

Successfully implementing the 2030 Agenda in this holistic perspective requires a paradigm shift and structural change at different levels, especially in the economic and financial sectors that should be reoriented through people-centred and human rights-based transformational processes and reforms. We are deeply convinced that building up a human rights enhancing economy is key to move forward in this direction, by always putting human rights at the heart of economic structures and business activities.

Once again, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have fully revealed the unsustainable structural limits of the current development model and the related business practices, too often driven by the only profit-seeking at any cost. As Pope Francis had sharply summarised in 2015 in the Encyclical "Letter Laudato si" (3), "the principle of the maximisation of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy". The current development model, deeply-rooted in this misunderstanding, needs to be deeply revised and reshaped by adopting alternative, more equitable and

sustainable paradigms, in which the economy is functional to the integral development of human beings and to their fundamental rights, and where human dignity and environmental protection are not overcome by the principle of the maximisation of profits (4). Therefore, a necessary key step towards a human rights enhancing economy is reversing the unfair economic and business models widely based on the primacy of profits over people and planet, by promoting sustainable, people-centred, participatory and inclusive economic and business practices. Throughout the world, non-profit sector, community-based organizations, social entrepreneurs and innovative enterprises are already experiencing such approaches, by exploring and adopting economic and business models that recognize and respond to human rights and environmental challenges by putting people and planet before profits. A notable example is "Economy of Francesco", an initiative inspired by Pope Francis to summon young economists, entrepreneurs and change makers of the world involved in studying and putting in place a different kind of economy, capable of guaranteeing respect for the environment, social equality and dignity of workers (5). Such economic and business practices need to be extensively spread and sustained.

Another crucial step to put on track a human rights enhancing economy is facing and overcoming the unresolved structural unbalances of the global economic and financial governance, in alignment with the transformational vision of the 2030 Agenda. That vision derives by one of the key principles of the Declaration on the Right to Development: the enabling of a national and international environment for development, which supports and determines the realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all. Advancing along the path towards a human-rights enhancing economy firstly requires to ensure this enabling environment and address the structural factors that hinder development, which mostly lay on the global economic, trade and financial architecture and its governance. A structural transformation, by means of systemic reforms within the UN framework, should be undertaken to remove these obstacles, such as: the crippling restriction of the fiscal space of low and middle income countries; the lack of a fair and UN-centred debt relief mechanism; the unjust tax avoidance of multinational enterprises; the absence of universal social protection floors; the democracy and accountability deficits in the global financial institutions; the unbalanced rules of the world trade regime and to access science and technology assets; the hidden conditionalities of development assistance and development finance.

Equally relevant for a human rights enhancing economy are the role and the extent of public policies at global and national level. Different priorities in allocating public resources should be established: first of all, by reducing military expenditures with the redirection of the released resources towards social investments, public services and health system strengthening, as well as the achievement of the SDGs and the support to sustainable economic and business practices. Public policies need to be increasingly inspired and driven by solidarity and equality principles and by a common good perspective based on the centrality of the human being. They should be directed to ensure that human rights obligations are always prioritized over financial, fiscal and commercial conditionalities at every level. Furthermore, such public policies should be adequately funded: realizing human rights (especially economic, social and cultural rights) requires financial resources and the necessary fiscal space. Echoing the words of Ms. Attiya Waris, Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt on the full enjoyment of all human rights, "there could not be effective promotion and protection of any human right without States ensuring adequate financial resources to comply with their obligations and commitments in a timely manner" (6). Expanding fiscal space, in particular for low-income countries, is vital to ensure the needed public policies, and should be sustained also through international cooperation and by addressing systemic issues, such as unfair foreign debt servicing and tax dumping, within UN-based frameworks.

In this perspective, and by adopting a transformational approach in implementing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, the steps needed to pursue a human-rights enhancing economy can be viewed as milestones towards fostering human dignity and dismantling structural drivers of injustice, exclusion and inequality.

- (1) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/fifth-intersessional-meeting-human-rights-and-the-2030-agenda>
- (2) As well described in the Declaration of "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" adopted by the UN General Assembly with the resolution 70/1 (<https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/70/1>).
- (3) https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
- (4) Written statement by APG23 for the 50th regular session of the Human Rights Council , "The coronavirus disease pandemic: lessons learnt and moving forward (A/HRC/50/NGO/95).
- (5) <https://francescoeconomy.org/>
- (6) Interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt on the full enjoyment of all human rights, Ms. Attiya Waris, at the 49th Regular Session of the HRC (<https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1i/k1imzg57nf>)