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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.

[22 August 2023]

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



On the Reports Concerning the Right to Development

Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) welcomes all the reports (1) presented at the 54th regular session of the Human Rights Council related to the right to development, however would like to focus, in particular, on the one of the Chair Rapporteur of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the right to development, Ambassador Zamir Akram, entitled “ Draft International Covenant on the right to development”, on the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development, Mr. Deva, and on the study on inequalities of the Expert Mechanism on the right to development.

1. On the report of the Chair Rapporteur of the OEIWG on the right to development (2).

As the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group noted during the High-Level Meeting commemorating the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development, held on 28 February and 1 March 2023, in the course of the fifty-second session of the Council, “the adoption by the General Assembly of the landmark Declaration on the Right to Development had been a ground-breaking achievement in the struggle for human dignity, freedom, equality and justice, with its bold appeal for every member of society to participate in shaping key decisions”.

For too many years, the right to development has been trapped in the politicized and polarized debate going on in the United Nations, especially in the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group and it is now time to make it a reality for all. We urgently need the creation of an enabling international and national environment as envisaged by the Declaration of the Right to Development. The life, well-being and respect for the human rights of billions of people around the world depend also on the implementation of the right to development and the establishment of an international social and economic order founded on justice, development and peace.

In this regard, APG23 is very glad that the finalized draft international covenant on the right to development, after a long negotiation in which our Association and its network actively participated, will be presented at the 54th regular session of the Human Rights Council by Ambassador Zamir Akram, Chair-Rapporteur of the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group, with the intention of forwarding it to the General Assembly for further discussion and adoption.

We are approaching two important landmark appointments at the United Nations, namely the High-Level Event to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the UDHR that will take place in December 2023 setting the vision on Human Rights for the next 25 years and the Summit for the Future that will take place in 2024.

It will be great to have the International Covenant on the Right to Development adopted as soon as possible in the timeframe of these two above-mentioned events and we do hope that such Covenant may be included in the Bills of Human Rights.

2. On the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development (3).

APG23 would like to comment also on the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development, Mr. Surya Deva. The report outlines Mr. Deva’s vision for reinvigorating the right to development; it highlights achievements in realizing this right over the years, identifies major current challenges for its full implementation and proposes strategies to overcome those challenges. Furthermore, the report includes the Special Rapporteur’s goals and thematic priorities and describes his methods of work.

First of all, we commend Mr. Deva for the way he wrote the report, being extremely clear and well-structured with the inclusion of figures that facilitate the understanding of his thoughts on the right to development.

Secondly, we could not agree more on the challenges the Special Rapporteur identifies for the implementation of the right to development, his method of work, his recommendations and the choice of the subjects for his next thematic reports.

Our Association wrote a submission to the call for inputs - 2023 reports of the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development and appreciates that Mr. Deva reflected some of our inputs in his report such as the role of the right to development in promoting a human-rights enhancing economy, the role of businesses in realizing the right to development, the need to ensure that the right to development remains a focus in the global discourse on the 2030 sustainable development agenda, especially in view of the SDGs Summit and of the Summit for the Future in 2024, the need for reforming the international financial architecture as well as the need to promote an holistic comprehension of the right to development building bridges among Member States and to further elaborate on the collective dimension of this right.

In his broad-brush approach, the Special Rapporteur, through the elaboration of the three elements, (namely participation in, contribution to and enjoyment), the four facets (a. self-determination; b. intersectionality; c. intergenerational equity; and d. fair distribution) and the four overarching principles of the right to development (self-determination, intersectionality, intergenerational equity and fair distribution) gives, indeed, a conceptual framework for the holistic understanding of the right to development.

In paragraphs 20, 21 and 22, Mr. Deva underlines the collective dimension of the right to development, the importance of States' duty to cooperate and of international solidarity to realize it, clearly referring to the right to development as a solidarity right. Furthermore, in paragraph 65, he affirms that "the right to development goes hand in hand with the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment".

In our opinion, it would be worthy for the Special Rapporteur to further elaborate on the interlinkages of the right to development with other solidarity rights such as the proposed right to international solidarity, the right to peace and the right to a healthy environment. In fact, international solidarity and the right to development are mutually reinforcing in creating an enabling national and international environment for the promotion and realization of a "new model of planet-centred participatory development", while peace is an essential condition for operationalizing the right to development.

3. On the study on "Inequality, social protection systems and right to development" "of the Expert Mechanism on the right to development (4).

We thank Mr. Ibhawoh for having completed the study following Mr. De Negri's resignation. APG23 fully agrees with Mr. Ibhawoh's call to set up a global fund for social protection and completely shares what he says in the following sentence: "In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, the world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed. This reality calls for global solidarity in tackling poverty and inequality. In an increasingly integrated world where transnational issues are becoming more and more important, national policy reforms will only go so far. Current global challenges necessitate new development models and reformed global governance systems grounded in reimagined multilateralism and strengthened solidarities, recognizing the interdependencies of all people and between humans and nature. Addressing deepening global inequalities and persisting poverty requires reshaping international cooperation policies and global partnership models in a solidarity-based, action-oriented and people-centred perspective".

As we underlined in our contribution to the study, the challenges of today are both to address the deepening inequalities and persisting poverty and to ensure a life of dignity for all. Thus, fighting against inequality is probably one of the biggest challenges of our time and it needs to be addressed through the realization of the right to development and the sustainable development approach (5).

There is a need to rethink the current economic and political paradigms and forge new economic models that are sustainable, people-centered and inclusive. Ensuring human well-being by respecting the planetary boundaries should be the file-rouge of future projects and narratives, not only for the UN, but for governments, civil society as well as the private sector.

As Pope Francis recalled in the encyclical “Laudato Si”, the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth should at last be heard and an integral ecology realized.

In conclusion, APG23 would have appreciated if this study of the Expert mechanism had addressed also the inequalities existing at the institutional level, including the UN system. A clear example, in our opinion, of such inequalities, are the unbalanced representation affecting the decision-making process in the global financial institutions as well as the discrimination based on race and gender in the appointment of the workforce at institutional level.

(1) A/HRC/54/27; A/HRC/54/Add.2; A/HRC/54/38; A/HRC/54/40; A/HRC/54/41; A/HRC/54/45; A/HRC/54/50; A/HRC/54/82; A/HRC/54/83; A/HRC/54/84;

(2) A/HRC/54/50

(3) A/HRC/54/27

(4) A/HRC/54/83

(5) Written statement on "Right to development and inequalities" submitted by APG23 for the 39th session of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/39/NGO/85).