



SOCIAL FORUM, 2 - 3 November 2023

“THE CONTRIBUTION OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (STI) TO THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-PANDEMIC RECOVERY”

Challenges and Risks from New and Emerging Technologies - STI and Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Democracy and Development

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

Check against delivery.

Mr Chair,

APG23 thanks the panellist for the insightful remarks.

New and emerging technologies have a key role in our society posing complex challenges in realising human rights.

Nonetheless, we cannot discuss challenges and risks of emerging technologies without underlining how the misuse of such technologies and innovations can not only endanger freedom, democracy and development but even perpetuate existing patterns of abuse, inequality and discrimination.

Indeed, with the availability of such technologies, also criminal networks have been evolving and becoming skilled at adapting to the changes of the world, taking advantage of the wide and marked inequalities affecting society.

By misusing technologies, traffickers put in place new illegal and cruel ways of grooming and exploitation: for instance, using online dating platforms and presenting themselves as recruiters or model scouts targeting young users through false information and fake online profiles.

Another critical risk concerning emerging technologies and innovations is the possible misuse of such technologies applied by Governments.

As a civil society organisation working on the ground, we have witnessed countless stories of mistreatment and abuses suffered by migrants and asylum seekers during their journey. Hundreds of violations and illegal pushbacks occur also using surveillance technologies by the border authorities. Drones and helicopters with automated searchlights make easier and quicker the detection and the arrest of vulnerable people on the move travelling along migration routes.

We strongly believe that governments, technology companies and all stakeholders including civil society organisations and individuals have a responsibility in fighting the misuse of digital tools and technology devices at all levels.

Increasing digital literacy, especially for vulnerable categories, is crucial to recognize potential exploitation in the online spaces, and protect users from exploitation, disinformation, as well as privacy intrusions. At the same time, the misuse of technology has to be avoided especially by Governments; strategies and policies have to be person-peoples centred and contribute to the well-being of the whole human family instead of protecting the interest of a few ones. In this regard, the Right to development can be the proper framework to realise such strategies.

Thank you!