



*Social Forum 1-2 October 2019, Palais des Nations, Geneva*

Oral Statement delivered by Associazione Comunità papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23)

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Mr. President

The concept note of this very important event states: *“The gaps between the reality on the ground and the imperative to realize the right to education for all children and youth calls for a paradigm shift, with solutions to reach those being left behind, which also ensure that education becomes “fit for the future”.*”<sup>1</sup>

We would like to start our intervention by asking: Which future are we preparing for our children and generations to come? Which societies are we contributing to create? Which future are we proposing through and for education in our countries?

Ms. Catalina Devandas Aguilar, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities once stated that ‘our classrooms are mirrors of our societies’.<sup>2</sup>

We believe there is the need of a deep change in societies in order to have fully inclusive education in which every child can develop his/her personality, talents and abilities to their full potential. An education that really would be directed to “the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin” and “the development of respect for the natural environment”.<sup>3</sup>

We are, indeed, living in the “profit society” rooted in “*Homo oeconomicus*”, where everything and everyone is marketable; the driving forces are “powering, valuing and having” and therefore human beings are valued for what they have and produce. We see all around us how discrimination, hatred and injustice are often shaping societies’ approach to diversity, and to certain extent, they are shaping also political responses to the problems affecting our world.

Is this the society that we want to be reflected in our classrooms? In our schools?

As APG23 we advocate, instead, for a society rooted in solidarity, social justice and the respect of human rights. A society in which the building up of the common good prevails, in the awareness that everyone holds in his hands the good of the others and that, in the common good, the good of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/SForum/Pages/SForum2019.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco-liaison-office-in-new-york/about-this-office/single-view/news/inclusion\\_and\\_empowerment\\_of\\_persons\\_with\\_disabilities/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco-liaison-office-in-new-york/about-this-office/single-view/news/inclusion_and_empowerment_of_persons_with_disabilities/)

<sup>3</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, art. 29

everyone can be found. In 1995, APG23 has also elaborated a new approach to education and school called School of Gratuitousness that represents an innovative answer to the needs of all children in the school system and in which students experiencing some difficulties are a resource.

In the School of Gratuitousness, the classroom becomes the place where the concept of gratuity is experienced, where educators and students share and work together for the passion of teaching and growing. The classroom becomes the place for experimentation and life, an environment characterized by the spirit of welcoming and cooperation. Each individual talent becomes everybody else's talent, the limit of the individual is overcome by the group together.

APG23, shares the idea that inclusion in the school setting can bring real benefit in the society as a whole, building an environment in which no one is left behind, contributing to the dissemination of a culture of equal dignity and full respect of human rights for all.

We look forward to the activities of the Social Forum and hope they will help the reflection on the inclusion of those left behind at different level of education and its benefits for societies, promoting and protecting rights of children.

Thank you!