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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.

[17 August 2024]

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



On the Reports of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development

Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) welcomes the reports presented at the 57th regular session of the Human Rights Council by the Expert Mechanism on the right to development, namely its Annual report (1) and the Study on the individual and collective dimensions of the right to development (2).

Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) deeply regrets that the liquidity situation in relation to the United Nations regular budget affected the ability of the Expert Mechanism to deliver on its mandate including the cancellation of country study visits, the participation of members in international meetings and conferences and the participation of expert guests in the eighth and ninth sessions of the Expert Mechanism. We also regret that, for the same reason, the coordination meeting between the Chair-Rapporteur of the intergovernmental Working Group on the Right to Development and the Special Rapporteur on the right to development could not be organized in person, as was previously the practice.

We actively participated in presence in the eight session of the EMRTD held in Geneva and followed remotely the discussion taking place in the ninth session held in New York. In our opinion, both sessions have been very well organized and fruitful for the interesting topics addressed thereto. We also appreciated the willingness and open-mindedness of States to engage in a constructive dialogue during the sessions.

Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) warmly welcomed the study of the Expert Mechanism on Climate justice. During the discussion on this issue, we remarked that climate change significantly affects human rights, particularly the right to development, as seen in the UNFCCC (3) and the Kyoto Protocol. States must do what is in their power to mitigate climate change and ensure that all human beings can adapt to it. A multilateral approach is necessary to find and implement effective solutions. Climate cooperation and Sustainable development cooperation should avoid competing for resources and attention but instead address both issues simultaneously and coherently.

Sustainable development cannot happen without addressing climate concerns, and tackling climate change mitigation necessitates the participation and commitment of all nations. To achieve fair development in the Global South we must re-evaluate resource use and compensation for carbon-balancing efforts, such as sustainable agriculture and reforestation. The Global North, historically responsible for climate change, has a moral and legal obligation to address the climate impact, under the UNFCCC 's Common But Differentiated Responsibilities principle.

Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) believes that the right to development offers a holistic lens to address the climate change threat, promoting inclusive economic models and protecting vulnerable populations.

Involving vulnerable communities and all people in the process of formulating climate policies is crucial, respecting their right to development. Funding for climate adaptation, capacity-building programs and technology transfer can assist them to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, in order to realize climate justice, States with major climate responsibility must be held accountable. The right to development framework can help harmonize these goals, fostering international cooperation and international solidarity, based on equality, interdependence, and mutual interest. It can help assessing historical contributions to greenhouse gas emissions and their impact on development disparities. Climate justice must promote a culture of cooperation, based on equity, collaboration, inclusion and respect, contrasting the current development model marked by inequity, competition, profit maximization, and environmental disregard.

By embracing the right to development principles, we can strive for a future that is both environmentally responsible and socially just. We support the adoption of an “integral ecology”, strengthening the connection between social and environmental justice while respecting human rights, as stated by Pope Francis in his Encyclical “Laudato si’”. It is time to commit and to stand together to foster a real change of paradigm by addressing human, social, and environmental degradation.

In relation to the thematic discussion on Women's participation in Development carried out during the 8th session of the EMRTD, Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) emphasized that the active and meaningful participation of women at all levels is fundamental for the sustainable development of entire societies. However, it is essential to also mobilize comprehensive efforts to encourage the empowerment of women in order to obtain their healthy, meaningful and above all long-term participation in the sustainable development.

In the thematic discussion on « Access to technology and the right to development », we remarked that the right to development, based on an integral, comprehensive, person-people centred development and the principles of equity, equality of opportunities, participation, indivisibility of human rights, international cooperation, self-determination, fairness distribution of wealth & benefit, non-discrimination and social justice, offers a holistic lens to address the access to technology and the challenge posed to humanity by the advanced role of artificial intelligence.

Technology is integral to development in the modern world. It is a key driver of economic growth, a facilitator of education, an enabler of healthcare improvements, and a medium for civic engagement. Thus, equitable access to technology is a prerequisite for the realization of the right to development. Regrettably, in many parts of the world, especially in rural and remote areas, the lack of basic ICT infrastructure, such as reliable internet connectivity and electricity, hampers access to technology. Bridging the digital divide is essential to ensure that all individuals can participate in, contribute to, and enjoy the benefits of development.

We are in a time of epochal change, in an unprecedented passage that is profoundly changing humanity and its future. There is a need to reflect on new technologies such as information and communication technologies, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and robotics. With the results obtained from physics, genetics and neuroscience, as well as the computational capacity of increasingly powerful machines, it is now possible to intervene profoundly in human beings. Decisions, even the most important ones such as those in the medical, economic or social field, are today the result of human will and of a series of algorithmic contributions. In our opinion, if we want the machine to support man and the common good, without ever taking the place of the human being, then the algorithms must take into consideration also ethical matters and not just numerical values.

At the ninth session, Prof. Mihir Kanade introduced the study on "Right to development in international development cooperation". Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) submitted a written contribution to the call for this study where it affirmed that it is time to replace charity-based cooperation models with justice and solidarity-based approaches, aimed at enhancing co-development processes that are people-centred and focused on the rights and dignity of the persons. We are looking forward to the publishing of this study and, meantime, we are very glad that Prof. Kanade reiterated the importance of integrating human-centred development approaches into international cooperation and treating development cooperation as a duty rather than a charitable act.

Finally, Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) welcomes the study on the Individual and Collective Dimensions of the right to development and thank Mr. Ibhawoh for its completion and for having included some considerations we offered in the written contribution to the call for the study.

Indeed, there was a great need to deepen up the issue since there are quite different opinions among States on the two dimensions of the right to development. The discourse has been part of the polarization and politicisation surmounting such a right and has its roots not only in political reasons but also in the cultural differences existing among the different coalitions.

We think that this study greatly contributes in shedding light on the individual and collective dimensions of the right to development, on their correlation as well as on the controversial definition of "peoples" and on the issue of States as right holders.

The fact that the Expert Mechanism believes that there can be no one-size-fits-all definition of "peoples" precisely because the specific contexts in which the associated rights are claimed or violated can be different and recommends of having a case- by-case approach in defining peoples is quite convincing.

In fact, it should also be considered that the concept of peoples within the UN system may not be static but dynamic, evolving in response to changing political, social, and cultural realities. Globalization, migration, and technological advancements have reshaped the dynamics of identity and belonging, challenging traditional notions of nationhood and citizenship. The emergence of transnational communities, diasporas, and virtual networks has blurred the boundaries between peoples, highlighting the interconnectedness of human experience and the need for inclusive approaches to governance and decision-making. In our opinion, in order to preserve the right to self-determination of peoples, especially indigenous peoples and minorities, it would be risky to define the boundaries of the notion of peoples and groups.

On the issue of States as right holders of the right to development, we still would like the EMRTD to further elaborate on the notion of “derivative rights” of States and on how this concept is related to the Declaration on the right to development.

(1) A/HRC/57/39

(2) A/HRC/57/40

(3) UNFCCC stands for United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.