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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.

[21 August 2021]

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



Climate change and the right to development

Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII welcomes the report¹ Mr. Saad Alfarargi, the Special Rapporteur on the right to development submitted for the 48th regular session of the Human Rights Council. The report focuses on Climate action at the national level and is based on the information and contributions received after the call issued by the Special Rapporteur on “Climate change related policies and projects from a right to development perspective “. Several Member States and other stakeholders contributed actively to this call describing good policies and practices as the report of the Special Rapporteur underlines.

APG23 has also contributed to the abovementioned call, firstly by making some general comments and providing a brief overview of the climate change related policies; secondly, by bringing examples of the APG23 good practices in combating climate change and implementing the right to development in some of the countries in which it is present such as Zambia, Brazil and Italy.²

The phenomenon of climate change poses great challenges to the realization of all human rights, especially the right to development. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released on August 9, 2021 its sixth Assessment Report. The report suggests that temperatures will increase all over the planet in the coming decades. For 1.5 Celsius degrees of global warming, there will be increasing heat waves, longer warm seasons and shorter cold seasons. At 2 Celsius degrees, heat extremes would more often reach critical tolerance thresholds for agriculture and health. Alongside, Experts clearly suggest that in order to stabilise the world’s climate, we will require strong, rapid and sustained actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reach net zero CO2 emissions.³ There is no time to lose at all.

By any means, while acting urgently, humanity’s collective response to this enormous threat should strictly follow a human rights-based and a right to development approach.

Particularly, the right to development promotes the respect of human rights for all, individuals and peoples. It provides essential guiding principles for sustainable development and it is essential to the success of a sustainable economy and an ecological transition. The right to development is not a right to pollute; « it is instead a clear call for better and breakthrough technologies that can reduce the side effects of industrialization. The core argument of the right to development is social justice and equal distribution of wealth as the need of the hour in the context of an unequal distribution of bargaining power in climate change negotiations»⁴ As the industrialised countries are historically more responsible for climate change, they have the moral and legal obligation (under the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR in UNFCCC)⁵ to take concrete steps to deal with the impact of climate change.

APG23 firmly believes that the right to development offers the right lens to address the climate change threat given its fundamental key principles. The RTD brings a holistic vision of the human needs and development, a vision that should be applied in creating new economic models and ways of production and consumptions that are inclusive of and protecting the most vulnerable people.

As APG23, we are actively involved in the process of the Economy of Francesco (launched in 2020 by Pope Francis), bringing the experience of an economy that springs out from the sharing of life with the poorest. We are engaged in promoting the concept of “integral ecology” explained by Pope Francis in the Encyclical “Laudato Sii” whose roots are described in paragraph LS 48 “The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation ». We are also engaged in advocating

¹ A/HRC/48/56.

² A/HRC/48/56 paragraph 84.

³ IPCC AR6, 9 August 2021.

⁴ Climate Change and Right to Development » by Mukherjee and Mustafa- Management and Economics Research Journal, Vol.5, Issue S3: “Global Warming and Climate Change: Part 2”, Pgs. 10, 2019.

⁵ UNFCCC stands for United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

for fraternity and international solidarity as deeply remarked in the Encyclical “On Fraternity and Social Friendship”.

In facing the historical challenges of combating the causes of climate change and reversing its devastating effects for the environment and the future of humankind, the international community urgently needs to set up and implement ambitious and comprehensive policies and measures that could pave the way for a real and transformative ecological transition. The huge public investments expected in the recovery plans that are being planned to emerge from the economic and social crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic are an historical opportunity to effectively proceed in this direction. This chance to re-orient the processes that are liable for the irreversible destruction of the Earth cannot be wasted: a fairer and more sustainable direction to the production and consumption patterns has to be undertaken, as well as a renewed and more democratic global governance of the economic and financial systems.

APG23 believes that the adoption of a right to development perspective is key so that the recovery plans and the policies addressing climate change can lead to the needed ecological transition and to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, the following principles should inspire and shape such programs, policies and actions: 1) human rights mainstreaming at all levels, with a particular focus on reducing inequalities and on the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable and marginalized persons and groups; 2) participation in the policies formulation, implementation and review by citizens and communities to whom such policies are addressed; 3) an overall policy coherence approach, in order to avoid that the direct and indirect effects of incoherent or conflicting policies can undermine the long-term results of entire plans and programs (in particular with reference to the policies related to arms trade, subsidies to polluting industries, global trade systems).

In regard to APG23’s good practices described in the contribution to the call of the Special Rapporteur, our experiences are primarily focused on participation of the local communities and vulnerable people, taking into account their developmental and environmental needs and priorities, i.e. through the use of local products with low energy consumption and environmental impact and through the adoption of sustainable production and consumption processes. Such practices have a potential positive effect on preventing, mitigating and adapting to the impact of climate change.

In Zambia, APG23 carries out a Home and Container Gardening project aimed at women with children who have been rehabilitated from malnutrition in the nutrition centres of the Rainbow Project⁶ in the city of Ndola. The objective of this project is to promote small crops in the land adjacent to the houses of the compounds, making the most of the water and the available space, whether they are in bags or containers or directly on the ground considering the preferences and possibilities of each person included in the project. It is done on a small-scale, it is sustainable and respects the environment. Other projects, such as the Recycling and Plastic Collection,⁷ awareness raising and environmental education and the photovoltaic project take place within our programme for children living on the streets and vulnerable children called “Cichetekelo” (Hope) in Ndola.

In Brazil, the care for the environment is an integral component of the APG23 approach. For this reason, great importance is attached to the protection of natural resources, the use of sustainable practices and the preservation of water. On this aspect, APG23 particularly works on access to water, since in this country water is an essential asset both for people’s lives and transport. Across the country, access to water is not universal: climate change together with a lack of adequate care in managing this precious asset, is the main contributing factor to a decrease in water availability that starts to be noticed.

In Italy, APG23’s good practices in combating climate change and implementing the right to development are oriented towards sustainable agriculture with the involvement of vulnerable people in social and agricultural cooperatives.

⁶ Rainbow Project is a large-scale model of care for orphans and vulnerable children operating in Ndola and Kitwe Districts (Zambia) since 1998 through a network of CBOs.

⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=457988081981470>.