

Palais des Nations-13th September 2013- Parallel Event on RTD and Post-2015 Agenda

Speech by Maria Mercedes Rossi (APG23): The advocacy of the Geneva Catholic Inspired NGOs Forum Working Group on Right to Development and International Solidarity: a perspective for the 2015 Agenda

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon!

I am the main representative of the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23), co-organiser of this parallel event.

I am addressing you on behalf of the Working Group on Right to Development and International Solidarity of the Geneva Catholic Inspired NGOs Forum. (The working group is formed by APG23, Association Points Coeur, Caritas Internationalis, Dominicans for Justice and Peace (Order of Preachers), IIMA, New Humanity, OIDEL and VIDES.)

APG23 coordinates this working group and participates actively in the Beyond 2015 Italian Task Force that is linked to the European Task Force and the Global Beyond 2015 Campaign promoted by a vast representation of Civil Society (800 NGOs from 100 countries).

First of all, I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Italy for co-sponsoring this parallel event and the other NGOs that expressed their support.

Our organizations are present at grass-root level and work with people living in poverty, in both developing and developed countries, as they strive to achieve their integral human development. On a daily basis, we observe how crucial and urgent it is for all countries to fully implement the Right to Development in order to overcome structural international and national obstacles that are root causes of increasing inequities between and within countries and that perpetuate extreme poverty.

Our Working Group on Right to Development and International Solidarity actively contributes to the debate of the Intergovernmental Working Group on Right to Development and supports the mandate of the Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity.

In our written and oral contributions to the Intergovernmental Working Group on Right to Development we always emphasise the importance of setting criteria and operational sub-criteria based on the concept of integral people-centred development, on the respect and protection of human dignity of all human beings including the unborn babies and embryos and on the respect of all human rights;

We advocate for an inclusive globalisation that respects cultural diversity, for International Solidarity to be recognised as a right, for a solidarity economy and cooperation, for the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity (as suggested by the Catholic Social Teaching).

Furthermore, we insist on good governance, participation and accountability: in fact, there should be adequate participation by all states, especially by least developed countries, in the decision-making bodies of the international financial institutions as well as greater transparency in the operations of these bodies; economic and finance decision-making power should be transferred from ad-hoc groups and fora with a limited membership (e.g. G-20) towards bodies that have clearly-defined intergovernmental mandates under the Charter of the United Nations, with universal membership and with open, participatory and accountable decision-making processes.

Social justice, peace and disarmament, environmental sustainability, equity, transfer of knowledge and technology, right to self-determination are also, in our opinion, core issues.

Fifteen years ago the UN's Millennium Development Goals set out to eliminate extreme poverty. They helped to bring enormous progress, but there is much left to be done. Now, with the goals set to expire in 2015, the world is rethinking its development agenda. It's a chance to get things right. It's a chance to include a goal for justice.

The MDGs helped millions to escape poverty and access essential services. Those gains need to be protected and entrenched. But they also tended to exclude the very poorest and most-marginalized people. The post-2015 development agenda must address both of these points: safeguard the gains made to date and reach those that have been excluded.

The recently published Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda focuses on the main goal of eradicating extreme poverty and envisions five big, transformative shifts as priorities based on the Rio principles. Such shifts are: 1. Leave no one behind. 2. Put sustainable development at the core. 3. Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth. 4. Build peace and effective, open and accountable institutions for all. 5. Forge a new global partnership.

This report explicitly mentions the Right to Development in the paragraph referring to a new global partnership.

Madame Pillay, in her letter, dated 6th June 2013, to all the Permanent Missions in New York and Geneva, entitled "Human Rights in the Post-2015 Agenda", clearly invites inclusion of the Right to Development in the agenda of relevant United Nations structures and processes. She appeals to political coherence based on human rights and invites to catch the historical opportunity to adopt a new paradigm of development; a development based on respect of human rights, equity, consideration for the most excluded groups, eradication of poverty, a healthy environment, international reforms as envisaged by the right to development, universal applicability, accountability framework, and obligations also for the private sectors.

At UN, we don't lack surely beautiful documents produced by experts, recommendations and so forth, but the real challenge is: will the outcome of the debate on Post 2015 Agenda remain mostly mere words for the poorest of the world as it has been to a great extent the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs agenda?

Our NGOs firmly believe that the Post-2015 development agenda should avoid the limited view of the previous MDG agenda and adopt, at every level, a human rights based approach that includes a focus on the Right to Development.

In fact, the Right to Development provides an integrated, holistic and cohesive normative framework for achieving just and equitable development for all people. It encompasses both the civil and political and the economic, social and cultural dimensions of human rights and addresses both the national and international dimensions of development.

Unfortunately, 25 years have already past without implementing such a right!

The debate on the Post-2015 Agenda is still going on at national, regional and international levels.

Hence, it is important to put more emphasis on and accelerate the implementation of the Right to Development as a key factor for realising an enabling international and national environment to eradicate poverty and inequities.

For this reason, it also is necessary for the Intergovernmental Working Group on Right to Development to speed up the process of revising the criteria and operational sub-criteria for the implementation of the right.

We live in a globalised era and interdependent world. The recurrent economic and financial crises, climate change, and food crises re-emphasize the relevance of the Right to Development and the need for its implementation.

Moreover, increased inequalities within and between countries worldwide show how the Right to Development is relevant for both developed and developing countries.

These inequalities also demonstrate that it is not possible to guarantee other Human Rights without the realization of the Right to Development.

The need to make progress with consolidating the principles of solidarity, collective and shared responsibility, with due respect for the sovereignty of peoples, and to facilitate effective international cooperation without conditionality, as well to find a balance between the national and international responsibilities, becomes more and more imperative.

International Solidarity includes, but is not limited to, international cooperation, and springs out of the notion of a communion of responsibilities and interest among individuals, groups and States, and is connected to the ideal of fraternity and the search for the common good. It also emphasises the concept of collective and extraterritorial obligations of States with respect to international cooperation and assistance, a concept firmly established within international human rights instruments.

We firmly believe that International Solidarity is interlinked with the Right to Development; International Solidarity and Right to Development are mutually reinforcing and both are keys to the achievement of a true integral development of individuals and peoples.

They shift the paradigm of international cooperation and assistance from a vision of mere charity and moral obligation, to an affirmation of solidarity rights and social justice.

This shift is seen as necessary for nations to become a human family and implement Article One of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that states *“all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”* as well as Article 28 which states *“everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized”*;

To build a better world based on International Solidarity is possible in spite of the present worldwide scenario: it is a matter of our personal choices as individuals and the political will of governments, of turning from being imprisoned into fear, intolerance and individualism, to opening ourselves to hope, mutual acceptance and awareness of being a global community. At present, many signs (natural disasters, pacific revolutions seeking democracy that end up into civil wars, climate change and multiple crises,) tell us that we should go in the direction of building a new world social order for the very survival of humanity.

There is no need to “reinvent the wheel” when, as a human family, we already have at our disposal the right lenses to set our sight on the best post-2015 goals for the common good of humanity. Such lenses are Right to Development and International Solidarity!