

Good afternoon, Ladies and Gentlemen,

on behalf of the Associazione Comunità' Papa Giovanni XXIII, co-organiser of this parallel event on Human Rights and International Solidarity, I wish to welcome all of you, and thank very much our co-sponsors and panellists.

The Associazione Comunita' Papa Giovanni XXIII is an international spiritual family of Faithful of Pontifical Right accredited to ECOSOC since 2006 with a Special Consultative Status.

The Association was founded in the early '60, in Italy, by Fr. Oreste Benzi, an Italian Catholic Priest who died in 2007 .

The Association aims to help its members to realize their Christian vocation trying to do the will of God throughout their whole life. Our charisma is to follow Jesus, the Poor, the Servant, the Suffering by sharing directly the life with the least.

The members (almost 2000), of different ages and states of life, share life directly with the poor and disadvantaged and are committed to removing the root causes of poverty and exclusion and to being voice of the voiceless through non-violent actions and means.

We are present in 25 countries on five continents (Africa, America, Asia, Australia and Europe).

The Association runs 500 welcoming structures all over the world, of which 298 are family homes where orphaned children, mentally and physically disabled, and others marginalised persons found a substitutive family. We run also emergency shelters, houses of fraternity, cooperatives and day-centres, therapeutic communities for drug addicts, centres for alcoholics. The Association carries out awareness raising campaigns, micro-credit schemes, services for disabled people, for Roma and Sinti, for the homeless, the prisoners, the immigrants, the elderly, the people infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, for mothers in trouble and women forced into prostitution. Further, the Association has a non violent presence in both fronts in war zones to guarantee the respect of human rights and assist populations displaced by the war, and carries out activities aimed at combating the trafficking of human beings and assisting its victims.

The Associazione Comunita' Papa Giovanni XXIII is committed to promoting the so called "society of "Gratuitousness", a society that is based on the awareness that everything (hearth, people, resources etc.) is a gift from God, a society that is based on the values of being, sharing and relating, where the least, the disabled, the marginalised set the pace of the human family's march.

This is the reason why, in our contribution to the work and objectives of the United Nations, we give high priority, among others, to the issue of International Solidarity to be recognised as a human right. We think that the debate on the recognition of the right of international solidarity is paramount for helping the human race to become a human family according to the contents of the United Nation Charter.

The fact that 1 billion people suffer from hunger, that 80% of people in the world are without social protection, that there are so many poor in the world, is a clear indicator that as human race we are failing to live as one family.

The establishment of such a society seems a very idealistic goal. Nevertheless, we concur with the Independent Expert when he says that in the multiple crisis situations of today's world, the importance of solidarity rights is phenomenal. The globalisation process, the food crisis, the economic and financial crisis and most of all the climate change threat are great challenges for humanity but also opportunities that can make the leaders of the nations see the establishment of international solidarity as an inescapable necessity so that what should be affirmed as an ideal, can at least be pursued as a common good.

We think that the ongoing process to recognize the right of international solidarity is a crucial strategy to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights in an environment of peace, security, and sustainable development;

We are glad that today Ms Elisabetta Garuti, a member of our Association and coordinator of Rainbow project, which is a model of care for orphans and vulnerable children implemented in Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia, will present to you our experience of micro-credits with women and families in Zambia

We are also very glad to have organised this parallel event with New Humanity, a Catholic international organisation with whom we are deeply in communion and with whom we network for this important advocacy on International Solidarity.

Thank You.