

ASSOCIAZIONE COMUNITÀ PAPA GIOVANNI
XXIII



Palais des Nations, Geneva, 4 February 2013

The Advisory Committee Declaration on The Right to Peace

WRITTEN STATEMENT

The Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII joins the network of civil society that supports the process of the draft declaration on the Right to Peace, being active for many years in promoting positive peace through peace education, peace keeping and peace building in the reconciliation process.

Therefore, APG23 thanks the Advisory Committee for its work on the Right to Peace and the delivery of the draft declaration.

As the preamble of the draft declaration states, APG23 is fully convinced that:

“the prohibition of the use of force is the primary international prerequisite for the material well-being, development and progress of countries, and for the full implementation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed by the United Nations” and

“All peoples and individuals have the right to have the resources freed by disarmament allocated to the economic, social and cultural development of peoples and to the fair redistribution of natural wealth, responding especially to the needs of the poorest countries and of groups in situations of vulnerability.

The peace operators of Operazione Colomba (Operation Dove), the APG23 nonviolent peace corps, have been living in the last twenty years with people who suffer from the violence of war. Their presence assures more safety, protection and normality to civil populations; their nonviolent action foster reconciliation between the parts.

Based on the direct experience in the field and on the results of other NGOs committed to a nonviolent presence in zones of conflicts, APG23 believes that an international non-violent peace corps could be an useful instrument to lessen violence, to protect minorities and to support local non-violent conflict resolution. It could act as a credible third party in case of conflicts that arise among or within Nations. The Governments could better accept such an intervention looking at it as a low profile non-armed presence rather than an armed political interference by other States.

Peace is possible but we must work together to make it happen.

Since 1973, APG23 is committed to promote conscientious objection and welcomes the service of Conscientious Objectors in its family-homes, shelters for the homeless, cooperatives and other activities caring for the most vulnerable in society, and in 1994 launched the campaign “White Helmets” (Conscientious Objectors at the service of Peace in the world). The White Helmets are young volunteers who operate in situations of structural violence and injustice in order to monitor human rights and express solidarity to the populations in the respect of local culture.

Therefore, APG23 particularly welcomes art. 5 of the draft declaration that refers to the conscientious objection because every individual should have the right to conscientious objection to military service as part of the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

The human right to peace includes the right to education on and for peace and all other human rights, as well as the construction of democratic, egalitarian and multicultural societies. In this regard, it is crucial to address the root causes of long-standing disputes and conflicts.

Aside from the advocacy for the Right to Peace, APG23 constantly advocates for the implementation of the Right to Development and the recognition of the Right to International Solidarity, being fundamental issues for building a world based on social justice and peace.

In this regard, APG23 particularly welcomes art. 2, 7 paragraphs, of the draft declaration on the Right to Peace, “Mechanisms should be developed and strengthened to eliminate inequality, exclusion and poverty as they generate structural violence, which is incompatible with peace” and art.9 that specifically refers to the Right to Development, since there is need to create an international environment that prevents the eruption of conflicts.

Finally, APG23 wishes to emphasize how important is to defend the dialogue and peaceful coexistence among cultures, civilizations and religions or belief, to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in order to create an environment conducive to stable peace.

In order to foster a climate of religious tolerance, political and religious leaders should take a human rights-based approach and clearly affirm the importance of the right to freedom of religion or belief in all its dimensions.