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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Joint written statement* submitted by Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Charities), New Humanity, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status, Associazione Comunita Papa Giovanni XXIII, Dominicans for Justice and Peace - Order of Preachers, International Organization for the Right to Education and Freedom of Education (OIDEL), International Volunteerism Organization for Women, Education and Development - VIDES, Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice delle Salesiane di Don Bosco, non-governmental organizations 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.

[25 August 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The transformative vision of Right to Development

Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII and the co-signing NGOs take note with appreciation of the report of the Working Group on Right to Development on its fifteenth session and the Consolidated report of the Secretary General and High Commissioner for Human Rights, both delivered at the 27th regular session of the Human Rights Council¹.

Since 2011, our network of Catholic Inspired NGOs has participated actively in meetings related to the work of the Open Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Right to Development. We also have submitted three written contributions on the revision of criteria and operational sub-criteria for the implementation of the Right to Development.

The above-cited Report represents an accurate summary of discussions held and consensus reached during the Fifteenth Session of the Working Group. We are pleased that Member States were able to mitigate the polarisation and politicisation of debate that emerged on previous occasions, and, in particular, during the two-day informal inter-sessional meeting on 3 and 4 April 2014. The Working Group managed to finalise the first reading of the remaining draft operational sub-criteria proposed by the High-Level Task Force on the implementation of the right to development and to propose new draft operational sub-criteria, including those suggested by our network. However, no decision has yet taken on how and when the working group should proceed with the second reading of the criteria and operational sub-criteria.

According to the UNDP report 2014², despite recent progress in poverty reduction, more than 2.2 billion people are either near or living in multidimensional poverty. Nearly 80 per cent of the global population lack comprehensive social protection. About 12 per cent (842 million) suffer from chronic hunger, and nearly half of all workers—more than 1.5 billion—are in informal or precarious employment.

The co-signers of this Statement feel compelled to raise this urgent question: How long can the international community expect persons and peoples, especially those living in developing countries and in extreme poverty, to wait for an effective implementation of the Right to Development? When will the Working Group on Right to Development focus more seriously on the search for the common good for all humanity and thus avoid becoming embroiled in political power games?

In 1986, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development, thereby proclaiming the right of all humanity – as peoples and as individuals - to the constant improvement of their well-being as human persons. The world has come a long way since that occasion. As an international community, we have seen unprecedented progress in virtually every sphere of human activity, including the emergence of a unified global economy and an interdependent human community. On the other hand, and, increasingly during recent years, development policies based exclusively on economic growth and showing little regard for overall wellbeing of the entire human family, have advanced a profit making mentality and thus has facilitated the widening of the gap between rich and poor and the rise of inequalities between and within countries. Such policies also have caused additional inter-related threats, challenges and crises as well as an unnatural and unsustainable ecological habitat.

Fostered and facilitated by advances in information, communications and technology, globalization has provided the context and framework of development that offers many benefits. However, those benefits were, and continue to be, overwhelmingly concentrated among the already privileged, nations and populations alike. The interdependence and interconnectedness reinforced by globalization also has resulted in negative impacts that cross national boundaries with

¹ A/HRC/27/45; A/HRC/27/27;

² Human Development Report 2014 Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience, page 3

increased speed and ease, and that affect, *inter alia*, such systems as the global economy, finance, food, energy, and climate.

The Right to Development has the transformative potential to unleash a paradigm shift that promises to advance human rights, development and peace for us all. It is time to effectively implement the right to development. If we wish to surmount the challenges to our common future, including poverty, inequality, hunger, unemployment, lack of access to clean water and sanitation, and limited sources of energy and natural resources, we must ensure respect for the right to development and for all human rights. The multiple crises of recent years further confirm the call of the Declaration on the Right to Development for meaningful reform in global governance, most notably in the economic arena, to ensure equality, democracy and accountability in line with human rights standards.

In this regard, our network of Catholic Inspired NGOs suggested new criteria and operational sub-criteria to the Working Group on RTD in an effort to identify a proper balance between national and international responsibilities in order to create an enabling environment while striving toward the realization of the right to development. Some of the sub-criteria are, *inter alia*, the removal of inequities in global decision-making in international institutions, the removal of asymmetries in international trade, the elimination of tax havens, the cancellation of foreign debt, tackling the root causes of climate change, and development of a new model of international cooperation based on solidarity.

Since the Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group decided, during previous sessions, to maintain the matrix of the High Level Task Force in the revision of the Criteria and Operational sub-Criteria, we suggested that, at the end of the first reading and before the beginning of the second reading, a compiled report will be drafted by the Secretariat. Such a compiled report should contain the suggestions proposed by all the stakeholders, civil society included, during the first reading.

The debate on measurability of the criteria and operational sub-criteria remains a very divisive issue in the Working Group. We agree with other stakeholders who point out that every major human rights instrument has been created by first agreeing on a legal obligation and defining the core principles, and only then considering mechanisms to measure whether or not the respective right is being observed. Experts might be more competent and neutral in the process of identifying indicators, while States should indicate specific national sub-parameters for responding to the needs of a specific population/country.

Our network proposed a two-year phase of implementation between the first and second reading and before the discussion on measurability, to ensure the effectiveness of the criteria and operational sub-criteria while experts can be tasked with making proposals on indicators. Such an implementation phase should be set up because of the centrality of the person and the people within the Right to Development.

During this implementation phase, States, in collaboration with International Organizations and Civil Society Organizations, including Faith-Based Organizations, should collect good practices and/or organize national consultations by involving people at grass-root level, paying particular attention to the most vulnerable in society.

We fully agree with the High Commissioner for Human Rights who said the following in her opening statement: "... procedurally and substantially, the post-2015 development agenda must have the right to development at its core. The goals, targets and indicators of the new development agenda must explicitly align the development framework with human rights, including the right to development".

During the 24th regular session of the Human Rights Council, we organised a side event entitled "Right to Development and Post 2015 Agenda" to which OHCHR participated speaking on the theme "Realizing the transformative vision of the Declaration on the Right to Development". Such event is also mentioned in the Consolidated report of the Secretary General and High Commissioner for Human Rights.

In fact, right to development is the most useful lens at disposal of our human family to set sight on the best post-2015 development goals for the common good of humanity. If the Post-2015 agenda will not be set on the vision of the right to development, it will be a great loss for the peoples of the world.

We welcome the new United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid al-Hussein. We reiterate support to the work of OHCHR, particularly in its efforts to serve as champion in mainstreaming right to development.

We would like to conclude with a quote by the former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan who said as follows:

"Even if he can vote to choose his rulers, a young man with AIDS who cannot read or write and lives on the brink of starvation is not truly free. Equally, even if she earns enough to live, a woman who lives in the shadow of daily violence and has no say in how her country is run is not truly free. Larger freedom implies that men and women everywhere have the right to be governed by their own consent, under law, in a society where all individuals can, without discrimination or retribution, speak, worship and associate freely. They must also be free from want — so that the death sentences of extreme poverty and infectious disease are lifted from their lives — and free from fear — so that their lives and livelihoods are not ripped apart by violence and war. Indeed, all people have the right to security and to development."
