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Panel discussion on the negative impact of the legacies of colonialism on the enjoyment of human rights

Oral statement delivered by: Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23)

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Mr. President,

APG23 thanks the distinguished panellists for the outstanding remarks.

As a civil society organization operating at grass-root level in more than 40 Countries in sustaining vulnerable and marginalized peoples and communities in the daily struggle to access and enjoy their fundamental rights, we can witness the harmful and multifaceted impact of the legacies of colonialism on entire Countries and populations.

This search for dignity, equality and human rights is often frustrated by the barriers of power relations and systems of oppression and exploitation grounded in colonial and neo-colonial structures, which heavily affect not only basic human rights but even the current and future development patterns of peoples and communities at every stage.

We strongly agree with the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development, which has stated in its recent thematic study on racism, racial discrimination and the right to development: "Key to the right to development agenda is the elimination of historical and systemic obstacles that have impeded development in many regions of the world. As outlined in the preambular sections of the DRTD, the obstacles to be eliminated include 'the massive and flagrant violations of the human rights of the peoples and individuals affected by situations such as those resulting from colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, all forms of racism and racial discrimination, foreign domination and occupation, aggression and threats against national sovereignty, national unity and territorial integrity and threats of war'." ¹

We believe that the holistic and comprehensive perspective of the right to development is crucial to address and remove these obstacles. It could pave the way to decolonizing the structures and practices that perpetrate the legacies of colonialism, especially in the unequal global governance processes, for instance by dismantling systemic exploitative mechanisms such as the unfair international trade and investment regimes and foreign debt mechanisms.

Distinguished panellists, which role do you think legally binding instruments on the right to development and on transnational corporations could play to reverse the negative impact of the legacies of colonialism on the enjoyment of human rights?

Thank You!

¹ A/HRC/51/37