**Maria Mercedes Rossi’ speech for the side event on LDC -15/09/2022**

Good afternoon! First of all, I would like to thank the organizers of this event for having invited me to be part of this panel.

I belong to the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII that is a catholic inspired organization present on the five continents in 43 countries, of which quite a number are Least Developed Countries. We share life with the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in many forms and projects and here, at the United Nations, among other priorities, we advocate for the implementation of the right to development and for giving a legal dimension to international solidarity.

Once every ten years, the international community gathers for a conference to address the key issues concerning LDCs. The [**Doha Programme of Action for Least Developed**](https://www.un.org/ldc5/doha-programme-of-action)Countries wasadopted during the first part of the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the preparations are going on in view of the second part of the UN LDC that will take place in Doha, Qatar on 5-9 March 2023.

UNCTAD reports that about 1.1 billion people live in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which face daunting development challenges. The LDC group grew from an initial 25 countries in 1971 to a peak of 52 in 1991 and stands at 46 today. Only six countries have managed to graduate from the category.

The COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the rapidly evolving character of globalization and the new technological realities of the digital age have worsened the already long-standing structural weaknesses of these countries. Paul Akiwumi, UNCTAD’s director for Africa and least developed countries, said that some added obstacles that block the sustainable development of LDCs are the soaring debt, export marginalization, energy poverty and climate vulnerability.

Development is a right of individuals and peoples. It means to have access to opportunities towards the constant improvement of human wellbeing. It means to guarantee the right to a life of dignity and freedom – freedom from want and freedom from fear. Therefore, it is time that the language of human rights and especially the one of the right to development form the core of discussions on development in LDCs.

While we insist on saying that the implementation of the right to development is relevant nowadays for both developing and developed countries, it is clear that for the Least Developed Countries such implementation is of paramount urgency and is needed more than ever.

At the heart of the Declaration on the Right to Development, there is the fundamental principle of creating an enabling national and international environment for development'. Putting this principle into practice requires a holistic and integrated approach to face global challenges undermining the enjoyment of all human rights, in particular the right to development.

(As I said this morning in our oral intervention during the biennial panel on right to development), an essential factor for building an enabling environment for a more sustainable and equitable development is to reorient financing for development towards people-centred and human rights-based transformational processes and reforms. Human rights obligations must be prioritized over financial, fiscal and commercial conditionalities, especially by shaping fairer debt workout mechanisms, global tax rules and world trade provisions; a more accountable, equal and democratic governance should be applied to global economic institutions; public interest and the common good have to direct any development finance initiative or investment; Official Development Assistance should be guided by the principles of meaningful participation and local ownership, avoiding any hidden conditionality and fulfilling the agreed commitments; adequate fiscal space needs to be ensured to fund national human rights enforcement systems also in low and middle income countries.

The accountability framework of the Doha Programme of Action should monitor an ambitious development finance package for LDCs. This includes strong commitments on ODA, debt alleviation, curbing illicit financial flows and lifting unilateral coercive measures that have negative impact to the enjoyment of human rights in LDCs.

Article 3.3 of the Declaration on RTD calls for a duty of cooperation and reinforces the obligations to international cooperation already affirmed by article 55 and 56 of the United Nations Charter, article 28 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and emphasized by the General Comment 3 of CESCR and other numerous GA resolutions.

The revised draft convention on the right to development (that we hope may be finalized and adopted very soon), deals very extensively with the duty to cooperate in article 13.

The duty to cooperate of States and the international community should lead multilateral measures directed to remove the obstacles to development, which mostly lay on the unbalanced global economic and financial architecture.

Such a commitment to effective international cooperation and solidarity among States is very much needed and due. This includes, among others, to guarantee fair aid, trade and investments, to carry out debt cancellation and transfer of technology, to end unilateral coercive measures, to revise intellectual property rights protection to guarantee access to medicines and vaccines, financing for development, to embark in institutional reforms, to strengthen climate change responses as well as implement once for all disarmament and reduction of military expenditure in favour of social and development policies in accordance with a human rights based approach.

The Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church phrases in paragraph 380 and I quote: “It is necessary to break down the barriers and monopolies which leave so many countries on the margins of development, and to provide all individuals and nations with the basic conditions which will enable them to share in development” The Right to development just envisions this.

As Catholic NGO, it is our duty to advocate for social justice, for a world led by the respect of human rights and international solidarity where the least ones set the pace of the human family.

I would like to conclude with two quotes from Pope Francis. The first is from the Encyclical Letter “Fratelli Tutti” and it says: *«Development must not aim at the amassing of wealth by a few, but must ensure “human rights – personal and social, economic and political, including the rights of nations and of peoples”. The right of some to free enterprise or market freedom cannot supersede the rights of peoples and the dignity of the poor, or, for that matter, respect for the natural environment, for “if we make something our own, it is only to administer it for the good of all”. (122).*

The second quote is from the Encyclical “Laudato Sii”, paragraphs 51 and 52 where the Pope speaks about inequities and says: “*In different ways, developing countries, where the most important reserves of the biosphere are found, continue to fuel the development of richer countries at the cost of their own present and future. The land of the southern poor is rich and mostly unpolluted, yet access to ownership of goods and resources for meeting vital needs is inhibited by a system of commercial relations and ownership, which is structurally perverse. The developed countries ought to help pay this debt by significantly limiting their consumption of non-renewable energy and by assisting poorer countries to support policies and programmes of sustainable development”.*

I do hope that the outcomes of the second part of the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, will be not just words but facts: all the people living in these countries, especially those living in extreme poverty and the most vulnerable should not wait anymore for their right to development to be fully realized.

Thank You!