



Concept paper for Parallel Event

“A Humanitarian Corridor for Refugees: A good practice of International Solidarity”

Organizing NGO

- Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23)

Co-sponsors

- Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations and Specialized Agencies – Geneva
- Community of Saint Egidio
- Forum of Catholic Inspired NGOs-Geneva

When

To be held in conjunction with the 32nd Regular Session of the Human Rights Council (13 June –1 July, 2016).

The Parallel Event is scheduled for June16, 2016, from 10 to 11 am in room IV.

Goals and Aims

The Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII through Operazione Colomba, its Nonviolent Peace Corps, has been present in Lebanon since September 2013, with the first exploratory trip across the country, then, from April 2014, settled in the refugee camp at the village of Tel Abbas, just 5 kilometres from the border with Syria. The Volunteers of Operazione Colomba spend most of their days visiting and listening to people, first of all refugees, especially those most in need, but they also visit Lebanese Christians and Muslims, trying to create links of solidarity between people who do not talk to each other, despite living nearby.

We live in an unprecedented era, where conflicts and persecutions around the world have forced more than 60 million people to flee their homes and an unprecedented number of refugees and migrants set out on a dangerous and uncertain journey in order to seek asylum in Europe.

Recently, in his acceptance speech for the European Charlemagne Price, Pope Francis invited Europe to build bridges and tear down walls and said: *“We are asked to promote an integration that finds in solidarity a way of acting, a means of making history. Solidarity should never be confused with charitable assistance, but understood as a means of creating opportunities for all the inhabitants of our cities – and of so many other cities – to live with dignity.”*

Before these words, the Pope had already given an example during His recent visit to the Greek island of Lesbos, by taking in the plane a dozen highly vulnerable refugees back to Rome, and offering them refuge.

Similarly, the Italian Government through its Ministers of Foreign and Internal Affairs signed an agreement with the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Federation of Evangelical Churches and the Waldensian church in Italy, for a project that provides the transfer of thousands of asylum seekers in vulnerable situation from Lebanon, Morocco and Ethiopia to Italy in a span of 24 months. Such a project is supported by the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII with the identification of the most vulnerable refugees and their accompanying through the different stages of the process.

At the core of this initiative is the desire to put an end to the deaths in the Mediterranean and the exploitation perpetrated by human traffickers through granting to people in “vulnerable conditions” a legal entry on Italian territory with humanitarian visas, with the possibility to apply for asylum.

In organising this parallel event, APG23 wishes to raise attention on these examples of humanitarian corridors, very good practices that are practical models of an international solidarity that can prevent the loss of life and the risks connected to the phenomenon of human trafficking. It could be worthy to reflect further and learn lessons from such pilot projects on how international solidarity can inspire innovative ways to face the current challenge of asylum seekers and migrants’ flux as well as bringing together institutions and civil society.

Target Audience

Officials and staff of United Nations agencies and other intergovernmental Organizations, Governmental representatives, officials and staff of Non-Governmental Organizations.

Speakers

- Moderator: Dr Maria Mercedes Rossi - Main representative of APG23
- His Excellency Archbishop Ivan Jurkovic, Apostolic Nuncio, Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations and Specialized Agencies – Geneva (8 minutes)
- Mr Cesare Zucconi- Community of St. Egidio (Roma) (10-12 minutes)
- Mr Alberto Bertoni, First Counsellor, Deputy Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations and Specialized Agencies (8 minutes)
- Ms Virginia Dandan, Independent Expert on Human Rights and International Solidarity (10 minutes)
- Mr Alberto Capannini – Member of Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII and Volunteer in a refugee camp in Lebanon (8 minutes)
- Testimony from refugees already welcomed in Italy through the humanitarian corridor (video)

Debate

NB: The official language is English. Interpretation will be available in French and Spanish- Refreshments provided