

Item 5 – Interactive dialogue with the HRC Advisory Committee

**Joint oral statement** (check against delivery)

**Title: Unaccompanied migrant children: a call to respect their human rights**

Mr President,

APG23 and 12 co-signing NGOs welcome the Study of the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee entitled “ The global issue of unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents and human rights ”.

This study is very timely and it documents how the phenomenon of unaccompanied migrant children is global in proportion and complex.

Based on our experience of caring for unaccompanied migrant children, we would like to state that:

Given conflict, disaster, climate, economic and other drivers of international migration, and the millions of families scattered across borders worldwide, the migration of unaccompanied children is rising rapidly. Whether on the move or blocked at borders without the possibility of moving to reunite with their parents, relatives and friends, unaccompanied migrant children are exposed to situations of extreme vulnerability.

Thousands upon thousands of unaccompanied migrant children are subjected to human trafficking and sexual exploitation, drug trafficking and forced labour and many of them disappear. This is particularly true for adolescents, especially for female migrant teenagers.

Restrictive immigration policies often prevail over child protection. Many children are still detained simply because they are not holders of proper immigration documents or because they belong to families of migrants in an irregular status. Such detention is inconsistent with the best interests of the child and represents a clear violation of child’s rights. Detention should never be used even as a measure of last resort. States should not forget that migrant children are, first of all, children who are holders of specific rights and entitled to special protection regardless they qualify for international protection, migrate for economic reasons, and are accompanied, unaccompanied or irregular.

Finally, we would like to ask to the Advisory Committee the following:

- Which measures does the Advisory Committee suggest to tackle the specific vulnerability of adolescents not only on the move but also to re-unite with their families?
- How can migrant children and their families be protagonists of their own development and participate in the adoption of strategies, implementation, evaluation and reporting of actions that concern them?

Thank You!

