

## **42nd regular session of the Human Rights Council**

### **“Building peace and reconciliation through the creation of a Ministry of Peace”**

Parallel event, 20 September 2019, Palais des Nations, Geneva

#### **PAOLO RAMONDA’S SPEECH-PRESIDENT OF APG23**

56 years have passed since the historic speech by Martin Luther King. It was August 28, 1963. 200,000 people listened to him.

I have a dream

“This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children.

[...] We must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force.

[...] We cannot walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead.

We cannot turn back.

[...] I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; "and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.”

The Ministry of Peace is part of this dream, for the construction of new vital worlds, of the society of gratuitousness, of the culture of love.

Since its foundation, APG23 has been committed to promoting integral development, respect for human rights and a culture of peace and non-violence. At the United Nations, APG23 actively participated in the process of recognizing the human right to peace, which culminated in the adoption of the "Declaration on the Right to Peace" by the General Assembly on December 19, 2016. And now, APG23 remains focused on the implementation of this right.

APG23's founder, Don Oreste Benzi, used to say: "Men have always, through the centuries, organized wars; it is time to start organizing peace". To act on this, APG23 proposes the establishment of a Ministry of Peace that should be in charge of this mission.

Peace is not just the absence of an armed conflict or a matter of inter-state relations.

A comprehensive definition of peace should address the realization of social and economic sustainable development, the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, the promotion of social justice, a culture and education for peace, non-discrimination, tolerance and dialogue, the building of good governance and institutions, of rule of law and accountability, among other things. A lasting and sustainable peace is dependent on all these elements and it cannot be completely achieved without their realization.

We must always keep in mind that peace is an ongoing process: even once we think appears to be achieved, we cannot take for granted that it will last forever; we need continuous efforts to maintain it.

Since having well-formulated statements without a concrete action plan and implementation mechanisms at different levels can lead to ineffective efforts and empty words, we propose to establish a Ministry of Peace in each country, as an effective step and as a response to the urgent need to implement the 2016 Declaration on the right to peace.

It is necessary to develop a well-structured and complete national infrastructure that is able to dialogue authoritatively and reach the local, national and international level – i.e. a Ministry of Peace, to ensure that each state fulfils its role as a leader in guaranteeing peace to all.

The legal basis of our proposal is in the 2016 Declaration on the right to peace, in particular in art. 3 which calls on States and other interested parties to take "appropriate and sustainable measures to implement this Declaration" (UN General Assembly, 2017, A / RES / 71/189).

Some suggestions for the functions that the Ministry of Peace could undertake are listed below. We focused on three main areas of action that we believe are particularly important for the full implementation of the right to peace.

- human rights;
- conflicts and violence, divided into two areas: 1) conflict and violence prevention, and 2) alternative dispute resolution and reconciliation;
- peace, divided into two areas: 1) education and culture for peace, and 2) promotion of peace policies.

International functions:

- protect and support populations in vulnerable or conflict situations;
- collaborate with the United Nations and regional institutions dealing with violence and conflict, build an international conflict analysis system to study past conflicts in order to analyze their root causes, manage present conflicts and prevent future ones;
- strengthen the mechanisms of international cooperation and diplomacy and support diplomatic “bottom-up” efforts;
- take action to promote international peace and security, as established by art. 16 of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, including:
  - a) to promote general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control (UN General Assembly, 1999);
  - b) conduct research to reduce military spending and implement the conversion of military industries to civilian production through an inclusive approach involving civil society, local authorities, trade unions and businesses;
  - c) monitor the arms trade and illicit financing.

The UNESCO Constitution acknowledges that “a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world” (UNESCO, 1945).

A change of culture is needed. Culture and education for peace are fundamental for fulfilling this task, also because they can be a crucial tool for dealing with the root causes of long-standing disputes and conflicts.

The Ministry of Peace should strive to spread non-discrimination, tolerance, dialogue, solidarity and develop a culture of peace, which is defined in the Declaration and in the Program of Action on a Culture of Peace as “a set of values, attitudes, traditions and patterns of behavior and lifestyles based on the full respect and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedom; in particular, respect for and promotion of life, the right to development, equal rights and opportunities for women and men; the right to freedom of expression, opinion and information and the principles of sovereignty” (UN General Assembly, 1999).

We invite the States to accept our proposal to create a Ministry of Peace and to select the functions and characteristics most suitable to meet the real needs of their territory. Therefore, we ask States to seek the possibility of creating infrastructures for peace and to understand the relevance of peace infrastructures both for local development and for the international implementation of peace.

Pope Francis often reminds that peace must be concrete; words of peace must be accompanied by actions of peace. The Ministry of Peace will help to make the right to enjoy peace real and to realize it, since it is a concrete, transversal and subsidiary instrument that can be adapted to different national contexts.

Especially young people are peacemakers and we must make this wonderful ideal real and concrete. The Ministry of Peace goes in this direction.

Thank you so much.