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Statement submitted by Legião da Boa Vontade, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2012/100.



Statement

The Legião da Boa Vontade, after fulfilling an intense agenda of debates in five South American countries, presents its recommendations on the theme “Promoting decent jobs and work to reduce poverty in the context of a green economy” to States Members, agencies and programmes of the United Nations. The objective is to contribute with recommendations for the High-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, at which the organization has general consultative status, and for the important United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

The meetings were part of the Ninth Solidary Society Network Multi-stakeholder Forum — Sixth Innovation Fair and were promoted by the organization with support from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and with national partnerships from the United Nations Information Centre for Brazil and for Paraguay and the offices of the United Nations Development Programme in Brazil and Paraguay. The initiative also relied on support from invaluable partners in Asunción, Paraguay; Buenos Aires, Argentina; La Paz, Bolivia; Montevideo, Uruguay; Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, aside from Sao Paulo and Londrina, also in Brazil, where workshops were also held. Hundreds of representatives of governments, the private sector, civil society and academia participated in these workshops either in person or through the use of the Internet. The themes chosen were dealt with in panels, exhibitions of good practices, workshops, cultural presentations, talks and press reports, both traditional and electronic.

Green economy and solidary development

This document aims to highlight some of the recurring points that were debated. The first of them is the “green economy” concept. There is great concern that its use may favour the first two pillars of the well-known concept of sustainable development, the economic and environmental pillars, to the detriment of the third pillar, the social pillar, since the three pillars should always be analysed on an equal footing.

In this sense, the organization supports the ongoing development of the Sustainable Development Objectives, which is taking place in parallel with the efforts to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals. The Sustainable Development Objectives can become a great new development platform of the United Nations after 2015, which is the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals. Such commitments would continue to have as their central theme the reduction in social inequality, but always combined with the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and the prevention of disasters.

In order for this new agenda to be successful, the organization also suggests that we go somewhat further by including in the debate the concepts of “the solidary development” and “the economy of spiritual and human solidarity”, which were pragmatically applied decades ago by the Brazilian educator José de Paiva Netto in the organization’s social and educational units, overcoming various moments of international economic crisis.

The author’s prognosis remains relevant today as it can be observed in his article published in 2011, in which he noted that in the case of the economy, the indicators pointed to difficult years ahead, and it was essential for people to

consider economics as the most spiritual of the sciences, in the broadest sense of ecumenical fraternity. Economics needed to discover the spirit of altruism. Referring to excerpts from an interview he gave on the subject in 1981, he stated that the human being, his eternal spirit, was the centre of altruistic economy, the generator of all progress. Without the human being, there was neither work nor capital. At a time when production expectations were constantly exceeded because of advances in technology, hunger really was a scandal. He referred not only to physical hunger but also to hunger for knowledge, or spiritualized education, without which no people were strong. On the one hand the world had never known such abundance, yet on the other, it had never known such penury. The economy lacked solidarity.

The fact that the organization gives central importance to the human beings and their full development allows us to identify them as the main focus of all the efforts to reach a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development. In this sense, education has a fundamental role to play in consolidating a new global awareness that prepares current and future generations for profound behavioural changes. That educational proposal, however, must be based on universal values that will increasingly serve as the foundation for and inducers of new development models.

That is why the organization invests heavily in formal and popular education of an ecumenical or universalistic nature, which is systematically promoted in its schools and social assistance community centres through mass media (such as radio and television stations, press and the Internet), civil society networks and virtual social networks, and through fostering the leadership of children and young people in more than 80 towns and cities in seven countries.

Success story: education for planetary citizenship

Cultural change processes are complex and difficult to monitor. The manifestations of new practices are evident, however, particularly among the youngest people, as a result of positive influence and encouragement. The organization proves that correlation with the countless family stories of triumph in which it collaborated. Some of the stories were shared with those attending the Multi-stakeholder Forum: some of the children the organization involved in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development collaborated in the 2012 Multi-stakeholder Forum, providing evidence of the sense of social and environmental responsibility they have in their adult lives as professionals and heads of families.

Many reports from the United Nations recognize the importance of the spiritual dimension in human lives, but that perception is not always accompanied in the same proportion by practical measures. The organization is optimistically viewing the emergence of initiatives like the GNH (gross national happiness) index of development, which adds new indicators to the conventional ones, capturing subjective aspects of human existence. They are important and determining factors of social structure as well as other aspects. Since its origin in the 1940s, the organization has been applying ecumenical or universal spiritual principles not only in its discourse but also in its daily practices.

A demonstration of this is the organization's own pedagogical proposal that guides all its activities: the Goodwill Pedagogy. It comprises the Pedagogy of Affection for children up to the age of 10 and the Ecumenical Citizen Pedagogy for

young people and adults. This proposal of education with ecumenical spirituality was created by the organization's president and has its own application methodology. It has been successful in empowering individuals in poverty situations, achieving results that include the social uplift of families, environments free of violence, zero dropout rates and high academic performance.

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon in which the absence of a minimum income level is its most apparent aspect. Access to quality public services, such as sanitation, health, energy and particularly education, is a determining factor for maintaining quality of life, even given the economic swings of countries. In order to overcome poverty, the organization seeks to combine the intellectual formation of excellence with the development of the individual's emotional and intuitive potential. The cultural and spiritual background of students is valued, helping them to overcome the stigma of poverty and discrimination, in an action that takes into consideration the needs of the entire family. Solidary knowledge and entrepreneurship are presented as alternatives to the individualistic and consumer-driven ideology that is present in society and that is especially cruel to the underprivileged.

In this way, the values of ecumenical spirituality applied to education are not superfluous, but an effective strategy of social and environmental investment, which promotes solidary development from the individual sphere to the planetary sphere. The organization is willing to share the principles of its teaching method with countries and organizations in the United Nations system, just as it has done in those countries where it operates on a permanent basis.

Recommendations

In addition to the necessary shift of paradigms, the organization adds the following recommendations highlighted from the reports of the participating countries of the Ninth Solidary Society Network Multi-stakeholder Forum — Sixth Innovation Fair developed in collaboration with the participants:

- Value water resources through the rationalization of fishing and the expansion of aquafarming. This activity has a strategic importance for inclusive sustainable development; it creates jobs and produces highly nutritional proteins. It therefore helps eliminate hunger and poverty, leads to food and nutritional security and avoids deforestation and environmental degradation.
- Invest in research on the energy potential of algae, which can be used as an important raw material for the production of bioenergy.
- Strengthen the water resources management systems of the United Nations.
- Give voice to traditional populations and prioritize their involvement in regional development processes, from the planning to the implementation phases, by valuing their history and consolidated ancestral cultures, with the purpose of making the resulting increase in food production compatible with the preservation of traditional sustainable forms of use.
- Intervene strongly in the structure of energy production and consumption by redefining a strictly market logic as the determining factor of our needs and adopting ways that have less impact and are more efficient.

- Encourage rural workers to stay in the countryside by fomenting regional tourism with the use of local labour forces and by providing people with training that gives them appropriate techniques for managing the soil in order to improve its productivity.
- Create social protection networks, especially for young people, with a focus on the problems of those who neither study nor work. The development of a network of tutors, the extension of the credit and microcredit system and the strengthening of secondary schools and social organizations are just some of the measures to be analysed and implemented.
- Boost the impact of organized civil society initiatives, enabling them to carry out an assessment of social and environmental impacts and to become self-sustainable, considering that there is a reduction in the sources of funding for them because of the crisis in developed countries.
- Foster activities for generating income through the reuse of solid waste and other actions of an environmental nature. The bags and accessories given to participants at the Multi-stakeholder Forum, for example, were produced by women from low-income communities linked to the Dwelling and Citizenship entity, who reused publicity banners that had been discarded.
- Value the profession of pickers of recyclable materials and its economic, social and environmental importance. Support the formation of waste-picker cooperatives and their articulation in a compulsory solid-waste-selective collection and recycling chain. Strengthen the awareness of the population as to the adequate separation of garbage.
- Strengthen food and nutritional security policies by encouraging family farming through the production of organic food and the use of community vegetable gardens, as well as strengthening the formation of food banks and community kitchens, like the ongoing experiments in Brazil. Make the population aware of food wastage and how to take full advantage of food.
- Guarantee a social and environmental protection floor for people living in environmental conservation units and sustainable development settlements. This floor consists of providing an income supplement as an incentive for protecting the forest. It is a way of remunerating them for the environmental protection services they provide to society.
- Create policies for supporting community associations and non-profit entities that act as facilitating agents for social inclusion policies.

The organization thanks all those who collaborated towards the success of the Ninth Solidary Society Network Multi-stakeholder Forum and is entirely willing to share any additional material. In conclusion it calls on everyone to adopt a sense of collective responsibility that is capable of guaranteeing the present and future of humanity, as expressed in the words of the president of the organization: “Managing one’s own home, entities, companies and nations is keeping ahead of the game. In other words, try to anticipate happenings by adopting a decisive, effective and preventive attitude and, given the risks that arise regardless of place or time, thereby avoiding difficulties or even correcting the course of things.”