**Human Rights Council Social Forum 2017:**

**"Promotion and protection of human rights in the context of the HIV epidemic and other communicable diseases and epidemics"**

**Panel 1: Implementing health related SDGs through a human rights** **perspective**

**Monday, 2 October 2017, 10:30 am to 1 pm**

**Statement by**

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First of all I think it is very important for me to clarify what the World Social Forum is. The initiative started in 2001 and it was a response to the World Economic Forum being set up on the same date, that’s held in Davos in Switzerland every year. So we set up a Forum in Porto Alegre in Brazil in January 2001. That was a city that had promoted ways of truly involving citizens in decisions. It was a way of showing there were various sectors of society in many countries who were opposed to the monolithic and hegemonic proposal for economic globalisation.

I would just like to recall that, in 19 91 with the fall of the Berlin Wall, a single thought, pensée unique, was instituted and so economic and financial interests prevailed over human rights. So there was this very conservative thinking which prevailed. The world social forum in 2001 was a way of showing that we were not in agreement with this form of economic globalisation and what we wanted was a different world, where we would open up the perspectives which would be provided by achieving human rights. So we wanted globalisation of solidarity and proposals which would foster the wellbeing of people and where we would have radical democracy based on social justice.

So, with that in mind, the health and social security thematic forum was established right at the start of the World Social Forum. It was a forum to deal with the specific human right of health and it was then extended to social security. It dealt with matters which weren’t covered by the economic perspective. We wanted to safeguard human rights and that we would have a trio, whereby all rights would be equal:

Everyone would have equal access, this means to say that everyone would have access to social security to meet their needs. We have then reflected a great deal about this so that those countries that do not have a universal social security system would be able to integrate this perspective and those who already had such a system would be able to take our considerations into stock.

We wanted to focus on the individual but within the framework of the right to development we can work on existing legal agreement whereby we will consider the right to development as a collective right. This allows us to safeguard a systemic view of all rights, a systemic view of security, civil and political, social security and the right to exercise individual identity within the framework of a democratic society without discrimination and a collective wellbeing project. So we established that framework for our thinking, it continues to be most relevant, this is because we face a very strong conservative hegemony, this means to say that rights do not orient policy. Those who have managed to establish rights find that those rights are being pressured from the economic rationale. This economic rationale seeks to safeguard the interests of capital but does not focus on individuals and communities so that’s why we decided to think carefully about transitional strategies, so we start off with resistance and then move on to transformation, so that is the main guideline for the next World Social Forum which will be held in March of next year in San Salvador de Bahia in Brazil.

So that we can change: we look for the various paths that countries can take in order to achieve the universality of rights. We look to see how they can co-operate as well in order to achieve goals at a national level, if we haven’t got a true commitment to national and international rules then the most developed countries will not be able to generate the ambitious proposal like the sustainable development goals. So on the international stage we need to look at what the balance of power is, we need a different balance of power at a national level, we want a different project then we have to move away from the individualistic projects that we have in countries today, people believe that individual entrepreneurship will bring them advancement, so they work towards their individual projects rather than solidarity.

So there is this very fragmented philosophy which is based on having things rather than participating in society. So this is the kind of educational policy that we pursue in the World Social Forum. If we want to work towards the sustainable development goals, we must educate towards other values in society and at the same time we must generate inputs which will have an influence on political decisions. We must rescue the parliamentary fora, which are, as Portuguese colleague said, controlled by capital at the moment particularly when private capital finances electoral campaigns. They don’t look at the needs of society. There are many fine words but this is down to the fact that media are controlled and there is increasing control over the legal apparatus, which means to say that court rulings are very conservative and this leads to rulings which try to create a stable environment for perpetuating capital.

So if we want a society for people we must not focus on poverty, we must look at how wealth is produced and distributed. Poverty centred policies make us blind to the way in which wealth is distributed according to Thomas Piketty, capitalism concentrates wealth, and in order to invert that trend we must extend democracy. Democracy only covers a very small space and it means to say that people cannot defend their interests, if we take into consideration the excellent proposals in the SDG’s, we will see that they will be crushed by capital because capital believes in the exploitation of man by man. So it will be very difficult for us to achieve a world in which human and social rights will guarantee a decent life for all.

That’s the message from the World Social Forum, we hope that this will contribute to your political thinking as to how we consolidate rights, but also ensure how they can be reflected in daily life. It’s a long path and the effort to generate educational policy which will empower people is the vital path of our activities.

Thank you very much