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of Churches

45th session Human Rights Council

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with Special Rapporteur on unilateral coercive measures

21 September 2020

Speaker: Ms. Floriana Polito - Caritas Internationalis

Caritas Internationalis and co-signatories welcome the report of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures.

We are deeply concerned about the negative economic, social and humanitarian consequences of unilateral sanctions, especially those introduced without and beyond the authorisation of the Security Council. As faith-based and Church-related organisations engaged in humanitarian service and/or subscribing to humanitarian principles, we too often witness the direct and indirect economic and social impact of unilateral sanctions on the population, especially on the most vulnerable. Rather than limiting its effects on targeted individuals or organisations, sanctions affect and let whole populations sink into poverty, particularly in countries already experiencing a protracted crisis and/or an economic crisis.

We have observed that unilateral sanctions not only make it difficult for countries to provide adequate humanitarian support to their population, but also have negative impact on humanitarian organisations and church institutions' ability to effectively reach people in need and provide them with critical life-saving assistance, particularly in complex and challenging humanitarian contexts. Reports from the field indicate that essential items as food, water, medicines and medical equipment for COVID 19 could not be delivered on time affecting families and vulnerable people in need as a direct consequence of sanctions. Depriving people of their fundamental human rights and dignity, even if unintended, is unacceptable and violates the essential humanitarian principle of *First, do no harm*.

We therefore call for such unilateral sanctions to be lifted, or at least significantly relaxed, as a measure of care for the people. It is a legal and moral imperative to allow humanitarian aid to reach those in need without delay or impediment, including in the current COVID-19 pandemic, and to alleviate the social and economic impact on civilian populations.

We also urge governments to avoid imposing future unilateral sanctions not in accordance with international law with predictable negative consequences on the population.

Current circumstances should not leave space for indifference to the suffering of people anywhere. The whole world is suffering and needs to be united in solidarity in facing the pandemic and the global challenges we are confronted with. All too often, sanctions have proven to be part of the problem, not the solution.

Thank you.