



**President of the General Assembly**

**Gayap Dialogue: “*Human Rights at 75: How to realize the promise of UDHR amid cascading global crises?*”**

**7 December 2023**

**SUMMARY**

The President of the General Assembly at its seventy-eighth session, H.E. Mr. Dennis Francis, convened a ***Gayap Dialogue***, ahead of Human Rights Day on 10 December and the Assembly’s informal meeting marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and coinciding also with the 2023 UN Human Rights Prize Award Ceremony on 15 December 2023.

Participants echoed a common sentiment that the UDHR and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action were indeed landmark documents that paved the way for the adoption of several global and regional human rights instruments. It was noted, however, that the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UDHR is taking place in a context of heightened geopolitical tensions, polarization, and divisions among the Member States. In this regard, there was strong emphasis on the urgent need to strengthen the multilateral system including the respect of all human rights.

Against this backdrop, participants underlined the importance of all human rights, without exception, and the wholistic recognition that civil and political rights as well as social, cultural and economic rights are global and universal. While it was pointed out that differences of opinion in this area cannot be avoided, in summary the participants presented the following perspectives, among others:

- engaging with honesty and self-introspection, rather than finger-pointing at others.
- talking more of the positive achievements, including references to the UPR mechanism.
- respecting regional mechanisms and avoiding confrontational approaches that undercut such mechanism from kicking in first before any other external interventions.
- avoiding double standards, and a prevailing perception that some are better custodians of rights than others<sup>1</sup>; and thus, listening more to understand each other’s contexts.
- appreciating that what is happening today on human rights is also a product of our history.
- raising more awareness on human rights, and not dwelling solely on power relations among Member States.
- engaging regularly also with CSOs and human rights advocates.
- acting more proactively, and not reactively.

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<sup>1</sup> PGA inspired the Gayap Dialogue gathering with a Trinidadian saying that: **One day watchman, one day thief.**

It was noted that intergovernmental negotiations during the latest session of the Third Committee were constructive, despite the difficult context. A point was made that the mandate of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights should be strengthened, in view of the current challenges.

A concern was particularly expressed regarding the politicization of the right to development, and that the interlinkages between human rights and development were already recognized in the UDHR. Expectation was expressed in this regard that future debates would be more constructive.

In addition, it was pointed out that the majority – if not all the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda – correspond to human rights obligations. As the international community aims to get the SDGs back on track, progress must be made on human rights obligations as they represent two sides of the same coin.

With the above summary in mind, participants therefore pointed out the need to focus on strengthening cooperation on human rights to close protection and implementation gaps, especially in developing countries. Trust in the UN must also be rebuilt with the public. The need to strengthen regional human rights mechanisms, as one of the most effective methods to enhance dialogue and conflict prevention, was also underscored.

Finally, it was reiterated that dialogue is key to strengthen mutual understanding and overcome deep divisions on human rights with the overarching goal to avoid the most serious human rights violations from recurring.

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