

Written Statement for Pre-Session 37 (Austria)

“Excellencies, Esteemed Representatives of Member states!

Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to bring in the viewpoint of civil society organisations. My name is Annelies Vilim, I am the director of GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY, the Austrian Platform for development and humanitarian aid, representing 35 member organisations.

The COVID-19 pandemic shows us how interdependent our world is and that countries in the Global South need more support to build resilience to crises. Such support for sustainable development is important to achieve the full realization of human rights worldwide.

During the second UPR, Austria received recommendations from Bangladesh, Benin, China, Senegal and Uganda to increase its Official Development Assistance (ODA) to the internationally committed 0.7% of its Gross National Income. In 2019, Austria spent only 0.27%. Therefore, we recommend that the government should develop a plan to increase ODA to 0.7% by setting interim targets, prioritising untied ODA and having sustainable development as the primary objective¹.

Trinidad and Tobago recommended that Austria adopts a human-rights based approach when designing projects of the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC). Human rights indeed are a guiding principle in the current Three Year-Programme of the Austrian Development Cooperation. Nevertheless, it lacks concrete measures and success indicators to monitor the effect. We therefore advise all actors of ADC to implement the recommendations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) to include human rights impact assessments, a monitoring mechanism, remedial measures and a complaint mechanism.

We appreciate the efforts of ADC to increase gender equality in targeted programmes. However, these efforts seem to be limited to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Austrian Development Agency. Therefore we recommend to implement gender budgeting consistently across all sectors and activities of ADC and substantially increase the funding for gender equality programmes.

Austrian policies and politics, for example in the fields of corporate taxation and the procurement of mineral resources, can have negative effects on development and human rights in the Global South and as such can be incoherent with the goals of development cooperation. Such incoherencies need to be addressed more effectively to strengthen human rights. In line with the recommendation of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD², we recommend to empower and resource a focal point for the monitoring of Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development at the highest political level in Austria. It should have the authority to address conflicting interests between policy areas.

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen!”

¹ As recommended by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in the Peer Review of Austria’s development cooperation efforts in 2020, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/bycountry/austria/>

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